

Northwest

Pennsylvania

Fishing Report

Reporting Date:

July 15, 2013



Pennsylvania's Great Lakes Region
crawford • erie • mercer • venango

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The NW PA Fishing Report provides timely angling information for Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango Counties – covering all species and all waters open to the public. The fishing comments and photos are offered by regional tackle shops and area anglers, compiled and published twice a month. The NW PA Fishing Report is based on experiences, observations and opinions of individual contributors; information sources are considered reliable but comments are not independently verified. If you would like to share your fishing experiences or photos from any waterway in the four counties, please email to Darl Black at darlblack@windstream.net. In providing information or pictures, you are agreeing to your comments being edited, and posted to websites and distributed electronically.

The Landing Net

by Darl Black

Water, water everywhere! Last summer we had a severe drought. This year, NW PA has too much rain in form of damaging thunderstorms. The storms certainly disrupt plans for fishing...but fish are biting if you can dodge the lightning bolts. Perch are on fire on Lake Erie; river small-mouth bite is strong; walleye at Pymatuning continue biting; crappies are hitting in many lakes; even the stocked trout streams have been giving up fish well into summer. The higher water may be helping the bass bite at Wilhelm...see the Lake Wilhelm report. High water (short of flooding) creates some problems, but in the long run, high water levels keep fish biting into the summer.



High water on Conneaut Lake at PF&BC Ramp

NW PA FISHING REPORT for July 15, 2013

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What's biting in the counties of Erie, Crawford, Mercer and Venango?



Darl Black photo

FRENCH CREEK – Flowing through all four counties

Editor's Note: Given all the rain of late, French Creek had been flowing higher and darker than normal for this time of year. Unfortunately, many anglers have decided not to fish the Creek. However high flow (not flooding) with color — but not muddy water — can make for great fishing when the right areas are selected; generally high water pushes fish to shoreline pocket eddies and into flooded mouths of tributary streams. Use caution when fishing high water.

Ed Lawrence (Corry) filed 7/15/13: "I've been fishing for largemouth bass in recent weeks, catching most on an **Original Rapala Minnow**. One of my favorite places is upper French Creek." (See Livewell photo)



Ed Lawrence photo

French Creek Water Trail maps and guides are now available at French Creek Valley Conservancy office at 301 Chestnut Street, Meadville, and Crawford County Convention and Visitors Bureau on Conneaut Lake Road/Rt. 322 next to Burger King in Vernon Township.

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Dave Richter (Richter's General Store) filed 7/15: "Even though it's the middle of July, with the high water and somewhat cooler water temps, anglers are still catching shallow walleyes in the weeds on a jig and crawler. However, with predicted high temps this week, this could be the end of the shallow-water 'eye bite. There are lots of crappies being caught on deeper brush structures in 12 to 18 feet of water, mainly on minnows. Channel cats are turning up everywhere! No muskies reported this past week."

Chris Hall (Espyville Outdoors) filed 7-15-13: "Walleyes are still be caught in shallower water...8' to 12'. But I think that will soon change given the hot weather this week – should drive them deeper. **Berkley Flicker Shads, Rapala Shad Raps, Lindy Shadlings and Storm Hot'N Tots** are the preferred trolling baits. The **AFF Walleye Wizard** has been very productive, not only for walleye but other species as well. Worm harnesses and floating jigheads with bait are catching fish, too. I have attached a picture of one of our customers with a 6-pound walleye caught this past week. Crappies have moved deeper; causeway has been a hotspot. Catfish are being caught in numbers. I can't keep **Magic Bait Catfish** in stock! Shrimp, Chicken Liver/Chicken Blood, and Grasshopper are the most popular flavors. **Bio Edge Fishing Products** potions and wands continue to be a strong seller. Their products are 100% natural and outperform other attractants on the market."

Ken Smith (Sharon) filed 7/15: "Today I fished the south end of Pymatuning for four hours. I could not find the crappies bunched up but I did find some here and there. I got some at 8 feet, 12 feet

and 19 feet. All came on a 1/8-ounce **Road Runner** head with **Lunker City Fin-S-Fish** body. Guys at the ramp said the walleye bite was slow.” (See Livewell photo)

Hooker (Hill’s Country Store) filed 7/8: “Hey Darl, fancy meeting you the other day on #24 GPS Way-point on Pymatuning – guess that hump isn’t so secret. The two gentlemen in the boat with me are in their seventies and have a difficult time launching and operating a boat but still enjoy fishing. We had a good day of catching fish and joking around. On the previous Saturday, I had Jeff Sampson and his buddy fishing the North End. We fished the long tapering points that drop sharply from 7’ to 13’ in about a boat’s length. Took time to locate the sweet spot, but when we did, **Gamma Line** and **Bobby Garland Baby Shad** helped us catch many 13” to 14” crappies and a bonus walleye along with perch and bluegills. The Bobby Garland Crappie Baits – particularly the Baby Shad – have become a valuable tool for my fishing clients.” (See Livewell photos)

Marilyn Black (Cochranton) filed 7/5: “After fishing with artificial baits for decades, I went old style with a simple nightcrawler to catch a 20” Pymatuning walleye on a weedline...seems like old times! Of course, crappies were biting too!”



Darl Black photo

Chuck Sari (Franklin) filed 7/4: “On June 30th, my son Kevin and my grandson Reece and I went to Pymatuning after several days of rain. We caught 21 walleyes of which 13 were keepers. We trolled **Storm Hot’N Tots**. There was no wind, so drifting with crawler rigs was out of the question. The water temp was 74 degrees, which was four degrees lower than a week earlier before the heavy rain. We also caught some nice perch and crappie while trolling. On July 2, my brother Frank, my grandson Reece and I were again on Pymatuning. We caught 8 walleyes of which 5 were keepers. Again, it was the Storm Hot’N Tots with silver color patterns, plus some on a **Cotton Cordell Walleye Diver**.”



Mike Mainhart photo

Mike Mainhart (Vienna, OH) filed 6/28: “My fishing buddy Marlan Blair (Meadville) and I fished Pymatuning after a heavy rain on Friday. We use a slow approach by kayak and canoe. When we mark fish on the sonar, we slow paddle through the spot. Bluegills and crappies are in deep water right now – 16 to 20 feet. The fish are near the bottom. Between the two of us, we caught seven nice crappies, six big bluegills and eight channel cats – always fun in a kayak. Everything hit a **Gulp! Minnow** in either natural or chartreuse.”

Conneaut Lake

Dustin Shay (Meadville) filed 7/7: Dustin reports success on recent outings on Conneaut for big bluegills. He also landed a long-nose gar on light tackle. “Wicked prehistoric-looking fish – check out those teeth,” he says. (See Livewell photos)



Canadohta Lake

Jerry VanTassel (Timberland Bait) filed 7/15: “The local anglers have been catching lots of northern pike on golden shiners in the evening just before sunset. They are fishing openings along the weed edge.

Other anglers are catching walleyes by trolling a worm harness or a leech on a floating jig just outside the weeds.”

Chuck Papinchak (Cochran) filed 7/15: “One of my fishing buddies reported catching a 30” northern pike at Canadohta that had a big bulge in it. When they cleaned it, they found a small duck in its stomach!”

ERIE COUNTY

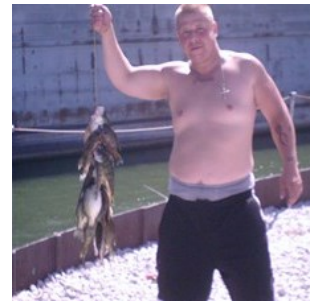
Presque Isle Bay

Al Nacopoulos (B.A.C. Bait) filed 7/15: “Fish have been biting, but the heat this past weekend has limited anglers to fishing early and late in the day. Panfish and bass are being caught in the Bay. There are still some smallmouth bass in the Bay, with customers catching them off the North Pier. They are catching largemouth bass off both the East and West Piers. Out in the main lake, they are getting perch in 37 to 54 feet, and walleye around 70 feet.”

Ed Atts (Utica) filed 7/13: “I went to Presque Isle Bay on July 12 to wade fish Marina Lake and Misery Bay. Water was deep green pea color and extremely weedy. The wade fly fishing for bass and bluegills is over for me this year at PIB, but it sure was great in May and June. I had a solo canoe in the truck so I paddled from Misery Bay to Marina Lake and back through the Lagoons. Not as much bird life as earlier in year, but a nice paddle regardless.”

Thomas Watral (Erie) filed 7/15/13:

- 7/15 – Went to the docks the last two days. Got 18 nice perch, 2 sunfish and one big catfish yesterday – all came on minnows except one on a crawfish. Today I caught 26 nice perch, one crappie and one silver bass on Crappie Rigs. Fish are hitting from 6 AM to noon.
- 7/13 – Perch, crappie, silver bass and rock bass are being caught from the docks and Piers. Most are using live minnows and crawlers, but some anglers are successful with crawfish.
- 7/9 – Fishing has been very good at the Border Pier bass, catfish, perch and silver bass using a two-hook rig with live bait.
- 7/4 – Being Fish for Free Day, lots of people were out fishing. Reports have been good from the South and North Piers. Perch are being caught in the lake at 45 to 55 feet. There are still some brown trout in the streams; they are hitting crawlers. Lake Pleasant has been giving up panfish and some trout on the edges of weedbeds.



Thomas Watral photo

Lake Erie

Gary Heuble (Poor Richards) filed 7/15: “Walleyes are in the First Trench at 70 to 75 feet. They are catching them on either a crawler harnesses or minnow plugs from **Bagley’s**, **Renosky**, or **Reef Runner**. A few steelheads are turning up when trolling plugs for walleye. Perch are pretty much distributed all along the lake west of the Peninsula from 50 to 55 feet.”

Ric Gauriloff (Trout Run Bait) filed 7/15: “Perch fishing has been very good recently, with catches from 45 to 50 feet off the Point on the peninsula, and on Sunday as deep as 70 feet off the Condos. Back to-

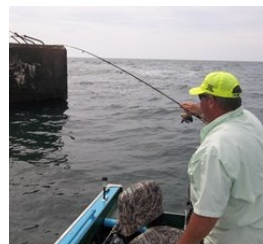
wards Elk Creek, walleyes are in 68 to 70 feet. Best walleye baits are meat on copper blade worm harnesses or **Reef Runner** plugs.”



Ken Smith photo

Ken Smith (Sharon) filed 7/15: “My friend and I headed to Lake Erie for perch on Saturday. We called ahead to check on emerald shiners, and learned from our regular shop that none were available. So we stopped on the way for fathead minnows. Everyone that perch fishes knows emerald shiners are preferred but sometimes fatheads will catch SOME Erie perch. We headed out to 48 feet to join the pack of about 50 boats and dropped anchor; we only moved one time. We left about noon when it was getting too hot. We finished with about 40 perch – some very good size ones among them.”

Norman Brakeman (Westfield, OH) filed 7/14: “Lesley and I took a day off over the 4th weekend and went to Erie for smallmouth bass. We fished the walls in the Bay with tubes with limited success. But when I changed to my **B-n-M Crappie Rod** with 4-pound **Gamma Line** and a 1/16-oz. **Hooker Bug** tipped with a **Bobby Garland Baby Shad**, I started catching 2 to 3-pound smallmouth one after another in the same place we had just fished with tube jigs!” (See Livewell photos)



Brakeman photo

MERCER COUNTY

Lake Wilhelm

Bob Mohra (Fergie’s Bait) filed 7/15: “I’m hearing more reports of bass being caught this year than last. Customers are catching them on spinnerbaits and buzzbaits. There some nice crappies being caught on **Southern Pro Stingers**. Not hearing anything about walleye, however.”

Ernie Pate (Butler) filed 7/15: “I’ve made three trips to Wilhelm this year and caught some largemouth on each trip. Two of the three trips myself or my brother had a largemouth over six pounds. Looks like Wilhelm may be on the way back – maybe the gizzard shad peaked.”

Scott Kinard (Ellwood City) filed 6/30: “I took the opportunity to fish Wilhelm on June 30; this was my first trip to Wilhelm this year. I had a good day landing a number of nice largemouth, including one that went over 5 pounds. It was a total post spawn bite; best bait was an **All-Terrain Tackle Swimming jig** fished around the weed edges. Fish were not tight to cover. Areas near good weeds produced best. From all indications, the lake seems to be fishing better this year than past few years. Bass are still coughing up gizzard shad when you catch them, but hopefully the shad invasion has peaked and is now declining as forecast by Fish Commission biologists.” (See Livewell photos)

Angler Al (Franklin) 6/29: Stan Hefner and I spent the early a.m. hours trolling cranks on Wilhelm. The weather was perfect for walleye fishing – overcast and cool. Rain was projected and we got it. However it didn't run us off. We stayed until 9am, but didn't even get a strike. This makes two weekends in row we've been skunked when rigged up for walleye. I would have never figured. I'm wondering what it might be that I'm doing incorrectly these days? Or, is it that this lake just isn't producing any walleye? Heck, we didn't even pick up a largemouth bass. Most times we'll at least get one of them while dragging along. Decided to use items from the new gift package I won (**Venom Salty Slings** and **5” Skip Shads**).

Wish I had a positive report, but can't. I left puzzled and not wanting to waste my time this lake again. Might anyone have a good suggestion or tip for fishing walleye on Wilhelm?"

Editor's Note: On Sunday, July 14, Marilyn and I fished Wilhelm for the first time in two years. With all the dismal bass reports coming from the lake in past couple years, we didn't know what to expect. But based on the fact that gizzard shad had exploded in the lake and the Fish Commission biologists' belief the big bass are following shad school around the open water, I decided to try an umbrella rig (**Yum Flash Mob Jr. with Larew Soft Swimmers**) over mid lake humps. I had just interviewed bass pro Jason Christie about umbrella rigs for an upcoming B.A.S.S. Times article, and I applied several of his tips. It paid off with a five-pound largemouth – my first Pennsylvania largemouth on an umbrella rig. We also caught a 24-inch walleye on a **Larew Hard Head Jig with Biffle Bug**. Of course, we spent some time crappie fishing too, landing a number of these from stumps and brush in 10 feet of water; most crappies were small but several were keeper size." (See Livewell photos)



Photo © Marilyn Black

Shenango Lake



Shenango high water— Darl Black photo

Ken Smith (Sharon) filed 7/14: "I took my granddaughter to Shenango last Monday before all the storms. We caught small crappies and bluegills for a couple hours. But it got so hot we had to get off the lake quickly. Water was high, but didn't affect the bite." (See Livewell photo)

Ernie Pate (Butler) filed 7/14: "My brother Ken and I won the KBBC tournament on Shenango on June 23. We had four bass that went 16.35 pounds – we actually had the three biggest bass in the tournament. Our lunker was 5.54 pounds. We caught two bass shallow and two bass deep. All four keepers were caught on jigs with Zoom trailers. Since all our fish came in the last two hours of the tournament, it was a pretty exciting day for us."

Stoneboro Lake

Chuck Papinchak (Cochran) filed 7/15: "During the past week I fished Stoneboro Lake for bass. I have been catching 4 or 5 bass each trip – some on topwater and some on drop-shot rig, but none of the fish are very large."

VENANGO COUNTY

Allegheny River

Gene Winger (Oil City) filed 7/15: "Fishing has been slow this past week. I've been averaging about ½ dozen smallmouth per outing. Most have been caught on a **Winco 3.75" River Darter Swim Bait** fished in 4 to 6 feet of fast moving current above and below main pools. My outings for the past couple weeks included..."

- June 26 – with storms predicted on Thursday, I hit the Allegheny a few hours on Wednesday. Good call – I landed over 20 smallmouths in matter of a couple hours. All on Winco 3.75” River Darter Swim baits. Most fish were in the 14 to 16 inch range, but two measured 19 inches.
- June 27 – George Sisul and I fished the river on Thursday morning. With heavy rain and storms predicted, our time was limited. By noon our count was 17 smallmouth bass and two very wet fishermen. Bass bite shut down when the water visibility dropped to about a foot.
- July 7 – After 12 days of high turbid water I could wait no longer. Sunday evening I was back on the water. With water level down to 5.5 feet and clarity improving, I was surprised the bite was slow. I landed only six bass, all on a chartreuse-colored **Terminator Spinnerbait.**”

Bill Logan (Pleasantville) filed 7/7: “I went to the river today and back on the 4th as well. Bite was slow in the stained water – all fish came on a **Strike King Spinnerbait.**”

Oil Creek

Mike Laskowski (Oil Creek Outfitters) filed 7/15: “With the water temp heating up in Oil Creek, the trout fishing is done until fall. However, the smallmouth bass bite is coming on. Triple Threat Streamers and Woolly Buggers are the best flies. Smallmouth bass can be found throughout the stream, but the higher numbers are from Miller Station Bridge to the mouth of the creek at Oil City.”

Other trout streams

Ed Lawrence (Corry) filed 7/15: “With the stocked trout streams warming to uncomfortable levels for the fish, I’ve been fishing the canopy-covered small trickles in the backcountry of Venango County for native brook trout.” (See Livewell photos)



Justus Lake

Chuck Papinchak (Cochranon) filed 7/15: “I’ve been spending time on Justus Lake for a big musky. I had several follows this past week and landed one 30 inch fish on a spinnerbait. This past Saturday night, four of us went night fishing for trout. We caught 17 rainbow trout after dark fishing 38 feet of water with split-tail jigs and split-shot – a lure typically used for crappies.”

Sugar Creek

Angler Al's Sugar Creek Journal

- Thursday July 4th – Brother Steve was home. We planned an early a.m. excursion for trout on Sugar Creek. Steady rains hit about 5:30 and by 7:00 Sugar was roaring muddy. Around 9:00 I decided to take a few big lures and a hand full of garden worms down the Burchardt stretch and see if I could get a big brown trout to attack. I only managed to pick up a little, smallmouth bass on a worm. It was neat to see a mature bald eagle on our country’s Independence Day. The encounter was Priceless...
- Sunday July 7th – After an enjoyable few days with family & friends, I decided to try my hand at fishing for trout on Sugar Creek. I set out for Red Bridge, but ended up going further upstream to the Iron Furnace above Wyattville. Though a tad high and brownish, it didn't take but a few casts with an orange bodied, gold blade, brown haired Rooster Tail spinner and I landed a 10” rainbow. Several casts later, another trout the same size took it. Then I switched over to a fireball egg and suspended it for float. On my first cast, I hooked a clone the other two trout engulfed it.
- Monday July 8th -- After a full day of good sunlight, water level and clarity was finally right, so near dusk I hit Sugar Creek with night crawlers, fireball eggs & spinners. I caught a 14” rainbow on an egg, a dandy 18” brown on a crawler and a descent smallmouth bass a yellow haired, silver blade Rooster Tail spinner. In my attempt to photograph the brown trout, he released himself.
- Wednesday July 10th – Although we were only afforded an hour and a half to escape to the stream, I had the pleasure of fishing with my cousin/adopted brother Steve Bell (retired Airman the Air Force) and his

son, Riley, of Yuba City, California. Steve and I grew up as trout fishermen on Sugar Creek, but 12 year old Riley had yet to ever catch a trout on any water. We went to the stretch behind the Wyattville Store. Steve rigged up with a red worm and I tied on an egg suspended set-up for Riley. 1st cast he got a bite. The second taker he hooked. Nice little rainbow. He also caught a bigger "bow" on a crawler. His dad did well too. He caught a total of four fish. For the 1st time in his life Steve had to purchase an out-of-state license. (See Livewell photos)

LIVEWELL Overflow starts here...

Sugar Creek—photos from Al Bell



Steve Bell



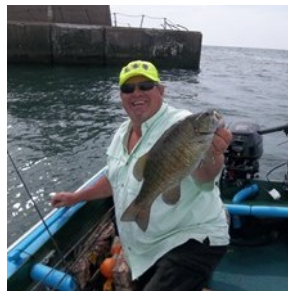
Riley Bell

French Creek—photos from Dustin Shay A 31-lb. and 35-lb. carp taken with a bow.



Tyler with 35 lb. carp

Lake Erie Smallmouth Fishing—photos from Norman "Hooker" Brakeman



The Livewell

Brought to you by:



Conneaut Lake — Photos from Dustin Shay



Spotted gar



Big bluegills



Boat of the Month: A great all-round boat for inland lakes and perch fishing on Erie. Stop by Wiegel Marine to order one .

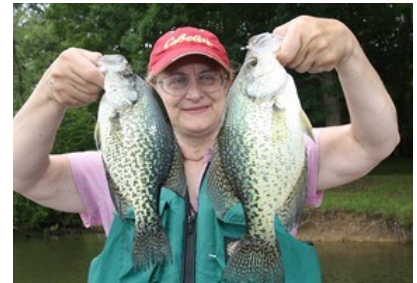
Pymatuning Lake



Kevin, Reece & Chuck Sari



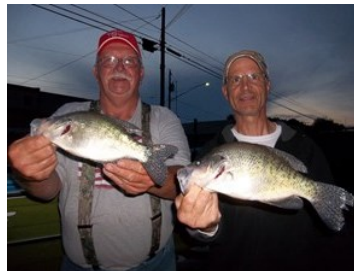
Ken Smith photo



Marilyn's Pymi crappies



Photo from Chris Hall

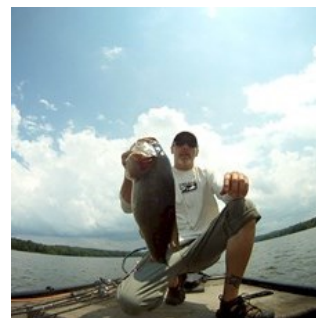
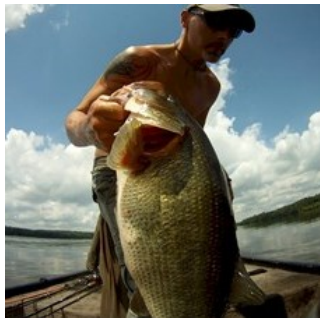


Happy clients from Hooker's Taxi! Photos from Hooker

Livewell Continued

Lake Wilhelm produces in 2013:

Scott Kinard nails big Wilhelm bass—photos supplied by Kinard



Marilyn Black scores with Wilhelm walleye and crappies



Darl Black photo



Darl Black photo

Shenango Lake



Ken Smith's granddaughter—Smith photo

PROCESSED FOR PERFORMANCE



Gamma Line's Fishing Tips

Gamma Pro-Staff Tip

Tip from Gamma Pro Randy Howell: "One of my favorite techniques is cranking shallow crankbaits through heavy cover to catch big bass. Line choice is critical in this technique, and I choose Gamma Edge fluorocarbon in 14 or 16 pound test. This line extremely abrasion resistant and offers a very low stretch rate so you can hook and land the big ones with ease. Good luck and God Bless."

Note change in Gamma Line prize: Starting in this month, the winner of a spool of Gamma Line will be drawn from among the contributors providing information or photo to the Fishing Report, as had been done last year. A packet of Bobby Garland Crappie Baits will accompany the Gamma Line. A prize back of baits will continue to be awarded to a name drawn from among each issue's contributors.

Winner of spool of Gamma Line for this issue of the Fishing Report: Ken Smith (Sharon)

Winner of the Prize Pack of Baits for this issue of the Fishing Report: Ernie Pate (Butler)

Lures for the Fishing Report Prize Pack supplied by: Case; Gene Larew; Get Bit Baits; Road Runner; Yum; Zipper Worms.

Follow Darl as he fishes with angling experts around the country at www.darblack.blogspot.com

Obtain the PGLR fishing brochure "Reel It In!" at www.pagreatlakes.com