

Northwest

Pennsylvania

Fishing Report

Reporting Date:

August 26, 2013



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

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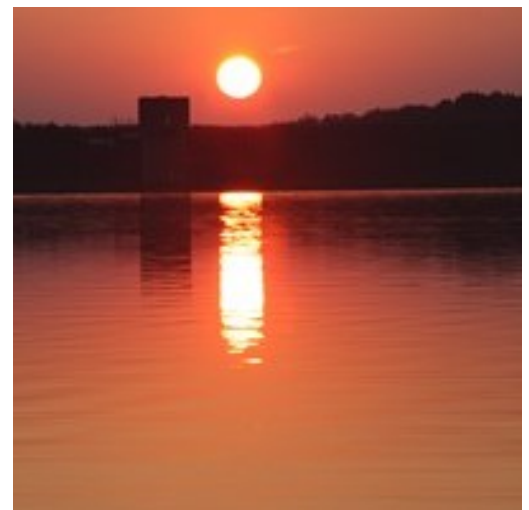
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The NW PA Fishing Report provides timely angling information for Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango Counties – covering all species and all waters open to the public. The fishing comments and photos are offered by regional tackle shops and area anglers, 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

With the sun setting on summer, anglers are looking ahead to cooling water temperatures of fall which send fish on feeding frenzies. Normally, September is a difficult transition bite for most species on inland waters, but this year some contributors are seeing signs of an early fall bite in the fish activity in several lakes – from Erie tribs to Pymatuning. Time will tell. In the meantime, there are a number of exciting events coming up – which you will find in the pages of this Report: a family multi-species fishing tournament at Pymatuning with Jimmy Houston as MC; French Creek Clean-Up Day; FOB bass tournaments on the river. Find contact info for all events in Report. Also, be sure to read the summary of the problems plaguing Lake Wilhelm in, where else, the Lake Wilhelm section.



NW PA Fishing Report for August 26, 2013

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

FRENCH CREEK – Flowing through all four counties

Attention! The 21st Annual French Creek Cleanup will be held on Saturday, September 7. For more information and a registration form, go to <http://frenchcreekconservancy.org>. Help keep French Creek a "one of last great places" for fishing and paddling; bring a team, win prizes and enjoy a picnic.

Mike Martin (Cochranon) filed 8/26: "Today, the 26th, John, Alex and I had a fair day for smallmouth bass on French Creek in terms of quantity – probably 20 to 25 fish. But they were lacking in size, with most in the 10-12 inch range. John did manage one good bass, caught in a deeper pool containing logs. He saw at least 2 other sizable smallmouth in the same hole. This was the first time we ever bothered to fish this spot, always floating by it. It will not be overlooked again! Most of the fish came on grubs and as always, my favorite **Yum Dingers**. Fish were in a variety of settings. We caught a few while wading and tossing into the runs near overhanging banks. Some fish came from fallen trees."



Marilyn Black (Cochranon) filed 8/26: "After working all day, Darl and I ran down to French Creek, caught a few riffle minnows and wade-fished the creek not far from the Mercer/Crawford County for about an hour – until our bait ran out. Lost several smallmouths due to short strikes and poor hooksets, but did land a keeper walleye!" (See Livewell)

Dustin Shay (Meadville) filed 8/26: "After getting creek bait on Saturday, we fished for walleye but only caught little ones – saw some larger ones in the current. Went for catfish Saturday night; landed a 26" flathead and my buddy got a 19 incher. I fished one morning this past week, using creek minnows as bait; I caught a couple walleye and about 20 smallmouth bass – but nothing of significant size."

Ed Lawrence (Corry) filed 8/16: "I got some fishing in this past week with a couple friends. We fished French Creek after getting bait from a smaller feeder stream. While gathering bait we managed to catch a beautiful wild brown trout and a nice smallmouth bass. This was fun on our ultra-light **Ugly Sticks** and **4-pound Berkley Mono**. After gathering enough bait, we headed to French Creek. We caught several nice smallmouths – all over 15 inches except one. **Gamakatsu Circle Hooks** with baitfish hook through the lips worked great. No walleye yet. I have a really good spot I'm going to try over weekend. We also managed a few bowfins in some weedy slack-water area; they are fun to catch and make things exciting. We release all our catch. The biggest bowfin was 23 inches and weighed over 5 pounds." (See Livewell photos)

Addendum: Ed made it out to his secret walleye spot on the 18th where he caught one small 'eye and lost one over 8 lbs. "The hook came out moments into the fight but not before I got a good look at the monster. WOW!"

Angler Al (Franklin) filed 8/12: "Around 7:30 pm, I took what live bait I had left over from the weekend and worked the minnows around a rock pile on French Creek. As it should be this time of year, the water level was low. Weeded up a bit, too. On my first two casts, I landed a pair of smallmouth bass. There were above average size (15-16 inches). As darkness began to sit in, I left one rod rigged with a chub and started casting a crab colored **Hot-N-Tot** on the other. The rod with the 7-inch chub set-up got ripped, but instead of hooking- up, I reeled in a shredded piece of dead bait!"

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Dave Richter (Richter's Sporting Goods) file 8/26: "There are a handful of guys fishing at night for walleye by hanging lights over the side of the boat to attract baitfish, then jigging blade baits below the baitfish; they've been catching some nice walleye. Daytime plug pullers are picking up few 'eye, but it is slow. There are lots of catfish being caught, however, along with some bluegills, perch and crappies, too. And a couple reports of largemouth on plastic worms from weedbeds."

Hooker (Hill's Country Store) filed 8/24: "Hooker's Fishing Taxi landed two magnificent smallmouth bass specimens this week. Smallies are beginning to move shallow on Pymatuning humps. While fishing with my son on Wednesday, I caught one about 3 pounds. We also caught a nice bag of crappies – all on top of the same shallow hump. Thursday I fished with an old friend and by day's end we put together a healthy fish fry with slab crappies for the main course. Friday morning, I fished with Dave Kota. Our main objective was to check some new placed deep brush structure; black and white crappie had already moved in. Then we went back to the shallow hump previously mentioned – this hump tops at 5 feet with rock and gravel, but no weeds to speak of, and drops into 15-18 feet. Dave was fishing a **Garland Baby Shad** in Monkey Milk color on a 1/16-ounce pink jig. I was throwing a **Garland 2" Swimming Minnow** in Bluegrass color. My first cast to the top of the hump got slammed. When I set the hook a 4-pound smallmouth took to the air. My heart almost sank as this fish cartwheeled on my 2-pound test line. But the line held; I boated and released the bass. Dave and I continued to catch a variety of predator fish, including keeper-size walleye, 14" perch and some impressive bluegill from this spot. There was a lot of surface baitfish activity with minnow fleeing everywhere. Looks like the fall feeding frenzy has started early this year." (See Livewell photos)

Hooker says don't forget the Multi-Species Tournament at Pymatuning on August 31 with Jimmy Houston as Master of Ceremony. First place prize is \$1,000.00. Unusual way of scoring gives everyone of any skill level a chance; last year a young girl won it with a sunfish. Go to <http://www.wogevents.com/> for more information. Contestants can register at Hills Country Store in Williamsfield, OH.

Hooker (Hills Country Store) filed 8/19: "Monday I was on the water with crappie anglers onboard. We fished a sweet spot on an old roadbed in 15 feet of water. A vertical deadstick presentation was needed to entice bites. We didn't boat a great number of fish, but we did get a few magnificent white crappies. On Thursday, I had Joe and Truk out; bite was good until the sun got high, then it shut down. On Sunday afternoon, I had Norm and Bonni from New Hampshire out bass fishing. We fished hard bottom points



Hooker supplied photo

leading to deep water, dragging **Larew Biffle Bugs** and Texas rigged **Biffle Os** rigged with 3/16-oz worm weight and **4/0 Daiichi Offset worm hooks**; we put several nice 3- to 4-pound smallmouths in the boat. But the big fish of the day was a 7 lb. 13 ounce largemouth pulled from under a docked pontoon boat! Hooker's Fishing Taxi is more than one trick pony!"



Foggy Conneaut Lake/DB photo

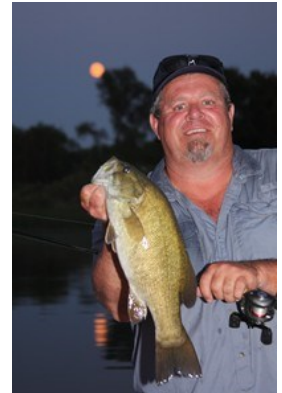
Conneaut Lake

Bob Mohra (Fergie's Bait) filed 8/26: "I fished Conneaut Lake twice this week for bluegills. We caught some nice one, along with 11" to 12" perch, in 6' to 8' of water on one of the mid-lake bars."

Steve Hughes (Clarion) filed 8/26: "I fished Walt's Tavern tournament on Saturday. Fishing was tough. We had 12 pounds of bass for 2nd place; 1st place had 13.9 pounds. All of our fish came by drop-shotting and flipping **Yum Bugs** on the weed edges. Lots of fish – no size. We caught 7 or 8 pike, with the largest one going about 40 inches – fun on a flipping stick!"

Woodcock Lake

Darl Black (Cochran) 8/26: "Last week, I fished Woodcock Lake twice on evenings leading to the full moon. (Rather I observed while others fish, due to a sore arm.) Fishing with Marilyn on Monday evening, she landed several quality smallmouths, including a 21 incher on a **Terminator Swim Jig**. The smallies were on fire – see my blog at www.darlblack.blogspot.com for details. Also, judging by the number of boats putting on at dark, the walleye are biting at Woodcock after dark. The next evening, I invited Hooker to come out. Unfortunately, something had changed and the shallow water smallmouth bite was gone (wind, water color and temps the same, but air was a little drier – not a single cloud). We missed a couple hits, and boated one bass and one walleye before heading in at dark. As we approached the ramp, we were talking about how good ramp areas can be for smallmouth bass after dark, but I told Hooker that I had never caught a smallmouth over 12" on this ramp riprap in the 30-some years I've fished Woodcock. I pulled up to the dock and I started for the car. I hear Hooker yelling and turned to see him battling a nice smallmouth and eventually lands! Lesson learned: never bet against Hooker!" (See Livewell)



Hooker's ramp smallie

Canadohta Lake

Jerry (Timberland Bait) filed 8/25: "The bite is slow at Canadohta Lake right now. I'm looking for fall muskies to turn on soon. Some of my customers are reporting lots of northern pike being caught at Lake LeBoeuf. Another fellow tells me that crappie fishing at Edinboro Lake is better than it has ever been... crappies are suspended."

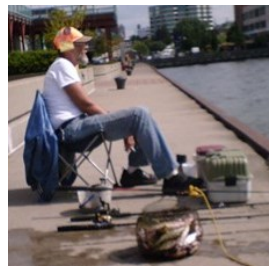
ERIE COUNTY

Presque Isle Bay

Jim (B.A.C. Baits) filed 8/26: "Customers are catching a few largemouth bass in the bay, and there are reports of crappies starting to feed. But the big news is on the lake. They are hitting perch in 45 feet of water off the point and walleyes out by the Canadian line."

Thomas Watral (Erie)

- Filed 8/25: "My step day was slamming the panfish at the docks today. He caught nice sunfish, perch and a crappie on nightcrawlers jig on the bottom in 10 to 15 feet. And he lost a rod to fish yanked it right out of his rod holder – he just saw a silver flash. Likely a steelhead."
- Filed 8/21: "We've been catching 12- to 13-inch perch from the west side docks on minnows and crawlers. Lost a huge carp that broke my line."
- Filed 8/17: "Got 34 nice perch today and yesterday we got 20 sunfish and 36 perch. Hitting crappie rigs tipped with crawlers and minnows – cast way out with heavy 1 ounce sinker."
- Filed 8/15: "My step-day Ron Dittman is leading the SONS fishing contest in bullhead division with a 23 inch, four pound bullhead." (See Livewell)



PIB/Watral photo

Lake Erie

Dan Seaman (Elk Creek Sports) filed 8/26: "Perch bite is good around 55' to 58'. There is a spotty walleye bite in 28' of water off Virginia Beach – not catching them every day. But out at 70', guys are getting them regularly – if they can get out. Walleyes out deep are coming on plugs; shallower fish are coming on worm harnesses. Seems someone is catching a steelhead every day from Elk or Walnut. A few steelheads are in the mouth of the stream in early morning then leave when sun comes up. If we get rain that brings the creeks, we might see a very early steelhead run."

Mike Tome (Trout Run Bait) filed 8/26: "The Erie bite is on fire – on the days you can get out! Perch fishing is phenomenal in 50' to 60'. Walleye bite is great at 60' to 75'. On the West side, perch and walleye schools stretch from the Ohio line to off the Peninsula. I can't get any better. There are even steelheads starting to show up in the creeks...one here, one there. We had our first steelhead photo posted on 8/16. In the 11 years I've worked bait shops along Erie shore, this is the earliest reported steelhead. If we get some rain to raise the tribs, we might see an early run move into the creeks. Also, there are a few brown trout milling around Trout Run mouth.



Erie perch /Shay photo

Dustin Shay (Meadville) filed 8/26: "My Dad has been enjoying success on perch and walleye on Erie. Fishing from his 16' Lund, on calm days they make the run out deep for perch or walleyes. See the pictures of perch with one of his buddies. Yesterday, Sunday, Dad and Mom went for walleye. Mom can still catch the big ones...see photo in livewell."

Ric Gauriloff (Trout Run Bait) filed 8/22: "Perch and walleye fishing has been hot the past couple weeks. Good numbers of perch off Walnut, Lighthouse, Trout Run and Elk Run. Look in 52 to 60 feet. They have been moving a bit every couple days. Walleyes are out in 70 feet or so, with plugs and spoons working well. Crawlers have been attracting other species, so the crew is sticking with plugs. There are a few steelhead and brown trout at the mouths of the creeks. Best time is right before dark until sun-up. Emer-

alds, crawlers, and single eggs have worked. Not worth a long drive yet...unless you want a chance to fish by yourself and hook a nice brown!"

John Hummel (Kennedale) filed 8/22: "Fished Erie with friends for couple days. Great trip! Pictured are Ed King, Bill Zenobi, Ben McComons and Terry Arblaster aboard Captain Dale Grimm's boat with first mate Ron. Eight miles out for walleye, 3 miles for perch. Limited out on walleye by 12:30 pm each day and perch by 2:30 pm. All above average! Walleye cheeks were size of scallops. A few junk fish like white bass and sheephead were fun, too."

Keith Eshbaugh (Dutch Creek Lures) filed 8/18: "Another successful trip to Erie for walleye. See photos. Lake was flat. We fished 67 feet out of Walnut Creek with 2 ounce weight, 6' leader with **Dutch Creek Ghost Blade Harnesses**, trolling 1.5 to 1.7 mph. Best blade colors were Rainbow Trout, Eridescent and Funky Cold One."

Joe Nichols (Underground Angler) filed 8/25: "We had pretty good time on Lake Erie today. Found smallmouth bass in 20 to 25 feet and caught them on dropshot baits, deep diving crankbaits and the biggest fish came by dragging a **Cruncher Baits' Tube**. I was using an **Airus 7' Micropuls** spinning rod; first time out with it and I was very impressed with its sensitivity."

Dave Lefebre (Erie) filed 8/22: "Just back home from the FLW Forrest Wood Cup, and ran out to fish smallmouth on the East side the other evening. In a couple hours I caught a dozen smallmouths from 3.5 to 4 pounds on drop-shot rigs."

MERCER COUNTY

Shenango Lake

Laurie Frantz (R& L Bait and Tackle) filed 8/26: "I have reports from customers saying they are still catching walleyes in 12 to 14 feet. Other than that, things have been slow at Shenango."

Lake Wilhelm

Bob Mohra (Fergie's Bait) filed 8/26: "Some locals are catching legal walleye on worm harnesses. Bass fishing reports have been slow. Lots of bluegills, but on the small side."

Lake Wilhelm Fishing Concern Meeting (McKeever Environmental Center) filed 8/24: Goddard State Park Manager Bill Wasser conducted a public meeting to describe the ongoing problems at Lake Wilhelm. Anglers have been complaining of sudden and dramatic drop in catches of all panfish and gamefish species at Wilhelm in the last few years.

The cause of poor catches has been attributed to an explosion of gizzard shad in the lake, based on the annual net surveys conducted by the PA Fish Commission. In 2004, the Fish Commission biologist discovered a single non-native gizzard shad in one of their collection nets; in 2010 that same net location produced 2,000 gizzard shad. In recent years, their nets are overflowing with gizzard shad: this spring 48% of all fish caught in the trap nets at Wilhelm were gizzard shad. Because the species runs amuck, the Fish Commission does not stock gizzard shad as a preyfish yet the species has made their way into many lakes around NW PA, likely by way of bait-bucket introduction or perhaps with eggs mistakenly mixed in with stocked species obtained from other states. While small gizzard shad up to four inches are acceptable forage for gamefish, shad grow rapidly to a size that cannot be utilized by bass, walleye, pike and or even

average muskies. As plankton eaters, gizzard shad compete for the same forage as adult bluegill and young crappies (and every young-of-year gamefish). Under a fertile lake environment, gizzard shad numbers grow exponentially. This is what has happened at Wilhelm.

In many cases, when first introduced in a lake the shad population explodes but reaches a peak carrying capacity based on the available nutrients in the water, then the shad population drops back to better balance with other species. Over the last 40 years, this has happened at Shenango Lake, Pymatuning Lake and Conneaut Lake – but over time a balanced was reach given the available plankton capacity and other species rebounded. It is questionable whether a balance will be reached naturally on Wilhelm because the lake is literally too fertile.

At Wilhelm, Wasser says the fish commission believes gizzard shad are going crazy because of too much nutrient in the lake. Excessive nutrients enter the system, creating plankton growth and plankton-eating gizzard shad continue to expand their population, taking necessary food source from bluegills and crappies. The result is stunted panfish. At the same time largemouth bass and walleye stuff themselves on an overabundance of young shad thereby greatly reducing gamefish need to search for food other than positioning themselves on Y-O-Y shad schools in open water.

Wasser says the Fish Commission nets show a lot of quality-size largemouth in the lake, but they are apparently focused solely on gizzard shad, and therefore not cropping the stunted bluegills. Wasser says the Fish Commission stocked fingerling walleye instead of walleye fry this year, and for the first time since the lake was impounded in the 1960s, the Fish Commission stocked fingerling largemouth bass – all in attempt to get more predators in the system.

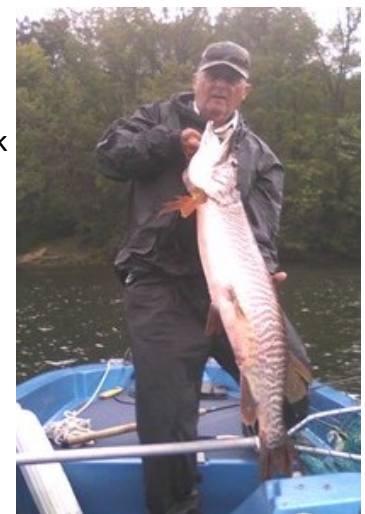
Currently a study is being conducted to assess the amount of nutrients entering Lake Wilhelm though various small creeks and seepages. This will provide some indication of where the nutrient problem lies, and with this information, application may be made for certain grants to mitigate the nutrient excess.

However, Wasser warns it's a complicated problem without a single easy remedy to return Wilhelm to great fishing. He points to a major education effort needed to inform lake users as well as organize volunteers to assist in various present/future projects to help control nutrient/gizzard shad excesses. To learn more about forming a citizen's watershed group which has been successful in other waterways, contact Sherry Simons (secretary for Friends of Goddard State Park) through the state park office at 814-253-4833. Fishing clubs and bass clubs who have regularly fished Wilhelm over the years are specifically invited to contact the state park office to learn what they can do. – Darl Black

VENANGO COUNTY

Justus Lake

Chuck Papinchak (Cochranon) filed 8/18: "I've been having a grand time chasing muskies on Justus Lake in Two Mile Run County Park. Hook some, loose some, and land one occasionally. Mostly on spinnerbaits. Attached is a photo of my biggest musky so far this year -- caught this past week." (See Livewell)



Chuck's tiger musky

Allegheny River

Mike Horrobin (Jigger Tackle) filed 8/26: "Seems like this has been a slow week in terms of catching fish on the river and French Creek. Customers are reporting some smallmouth bass action early and late in the day (low light periods) on both the Allegheny and French. There was a report of a 27" walleye from the river, but I did not see the fish or a photo of the fish."



Lots of small smallies

Chris Wolfgang (Oil City) filed 8/25: "I joined Darl at the Franklin to fish for couple hours in the morning south of Franklin. At our first stop – a deep, flowing hole rising onto a mid-river rock bar – we immediately had action. Anchored there for about an hour, we had a good number of hits but lost more fish than landed. Darl was fishing riffle minnows while I cast a small **Get Bit Tube**, **Yum Houdini Shad** and **Dinger**. Most fish landed were small; one decent one on the Livewell page. While live bait did not outfish artificial baits, Darl lost a very large smallie on a riffle minnow. With the sun high, the bite died."

Chuck Sari (Franklin) filed 8/25: "On Friday, 8/23, I fished the Allegheny with Lloyd Rodgers and my grandson Reece. The fishing was very slow; we only managed 5 small bass and one nice walleye **on Rapala SR5s**. On Saturday, 8/24, I fished the river again with my son Kevin and of course Reece. We decided to try live bait. I caught a mixture of 30 riffle minnows and chubs from French Creek. We ended up catching and releasing 17 bass including several in the 16- to 18-inch class and 3 nice walleyes." (See Livewell photo)

John Conroy (Moon Township) filed 8/23: "My son Forrest and I caught 24 smallmouth bass last Sunday on a combination of live bait (hellgrammites under slip bobber), and **Zoom Flukes** rigged semi-weedless to get round the floating weeds. Hint – I placed a small finishing nail up inside the Fluke to add a little weight rather than use a bullet sinker on the nose which would collect weeds. Guess you can say we 'nailed them!' Out of 27 bass, we had 7 over 17 inches. We fished the President to Ahrensville section during midday."

John Hummel (Kennerdell) filed 8/18: "Guy Bernardini of Tarentum, landed a 30" channel cat from the Allegheny south of Kennerdell." (See Livewell photo)

Eric Heil (Franklin) filed 8/15: "The Fraternal Order of Police's Allegheny River bass tournaments are scheduled for Sunday, September 15 and Sunday October 13. Both are out of Oil City launch. Contact me for applications at ekaheil@comcast.net."



Angler Al/Bell photo

Angler Al (Franklin) filed 8/13: "Stan and I met around 6:30 pm at the marina in Oil City. We immediately headed south. The cool evening weather reminded me of late September. In no time at all, I boated a nice smallie, and Stan hooked up on a 28" northern pike. Good battle to witness. Near dark, I won a splendid tub of war with a 24" flathead catfish. Darn it, no flash on the camera!"



Stan/Bell photo

The Livewell

Brought to you by:



Woodcock Lake this week...



Marilyn Black/ DB photo



Hooker/DB photo

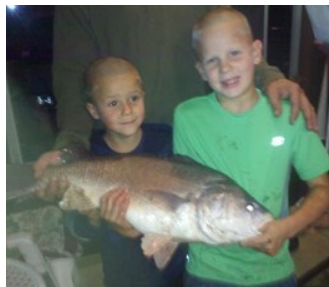


Boat of the Month: New Kingfisher river jets are now in. Stop in to see the 1975 Fastwater, 1875 Extreme Shallow and 1875 Falcon—just in time for fall and winter fishing on the river.

French Creek this week...



Flathead cat/Shay photo



Sheephead/Shay photo



Marilyn with FC 'eye/DB photo

Ed Lawrence photos from French Creek & tributary.:



Wild brown trout



Smallmouth bass



Bowfin

Livewell Overflow: Lake Erie and Allegheny River

Danny Shay photos from Erie

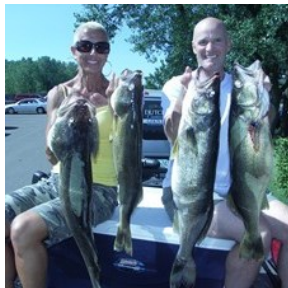
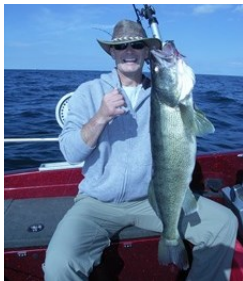


Helen outfishes the guys

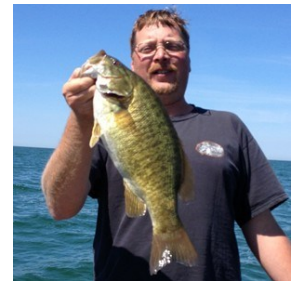
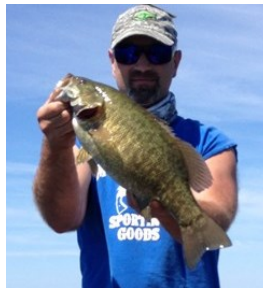
John Hummel photos from Erie trip



Keith Eshbaugh photos from Erie



Joe Nichols photos from Erie



Allegheny River this week..



Kevin & Reece/Sari photo



John Conroy photo



Guy's 30" channel cat



Chris Wolfgang/DB photo

PROCESSED FOR PERFORMANCE



Gamma Fishing Tips

Rigging Tip

Darl Black: For the first time since I started using Gamma Line almost exclusively six year ago, my line while fighting a fish — not the knot but the six-pound line. It was fishing live blue dot minnow in the Allegheny with a light power, moderate action rod with a lot of forgiveness. Hooked the fish, it jumped near the boat showing itself to be somewhere in the 3.5 to 4 pound category. The fish dove, and ‘pop’ went the line. I was shocked. But I immediately realized the cause.

In my haste to get my line wet, I simply crimped a couple split-shot on the line about 12 inches ahead of the hook. It’s simple rig that many anglers use every day — although I rarely do for a very good reason: pinching a ‘shot’ onto the line can nick or stress the line. The shot may have had a sharp edge, or I may have squeezed too tightly. And we know what happens to a weak point in a reel to fish connection — it breaks under pressure.

Normally, when fishing this type of live bait rig for anything other than panfish, I use a rubber peg to secure a small sliding sinker to the line. I opt for the Peg-It rubber pegs, and either a 1/16-ounce or 1/8-ounce Precision Brass Weight or Pro-Jo sliding finesse weight — all from **Top Brass Tackle (topbrasstackle.com)**. By using a rubber peg to secure a sliding weight, you eliminate the risk of nicking line with a split shot, and it allows you to adjust the lead as needed. Had I taken the extra 30 seconds to get a Peg-It out of the tackle bag, I would be showing you a nice bronzeback instead of a blank space.

Winner of the spool of Gamma Line for this issue of Fishing Report: Mike Martin

Winner of the Prize Pack of Baits for this issue of the Fishing Report: John Hummel

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

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

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