

## Northwest

## Pennsylvania

## Fishing Report



**Reporting Date:**

**October 29, 2012**

**Pennsylvania's Great Lakes Region**  
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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](mailto:darlblack@windstream.net). In providing information or pictures, you are agreeing to it being posted in the Fishing Report and distributed electronically to media and websites.

## The Landing Net

**by Darl Black**

Last week, outdoor writer Bud Cole from eastern Pennsylvania discovered firsthand how low and clear the Erie steelhead tributaries were running, and why everyone wanted water. "Careful what you wish for," he said. Well, the much needed rains have finally arrived – unfortunately all at once. Thankfully, our area did not receive the devastation of the East Coast but we are experiencing some minor setbacks. Steelhead streams are blown out. Many other inland creeks are over their banks in low spots. This morning, 10/30, the Allegheny River gauge at Franklin is 8 feet and rising rapidly (flow had been around 3 feet). It will be sometime before fishing can resume on the Allegheny and French Creek. On the bright side, the high water moved steelhead into the streams. As French Creek and the Allegheny slowly drop and clear a bit, fishing for bass, walleye and musky will likely be very good for November – as long as water temps hold in the 40s. And the levels of Pymatuning and Shenango lakes are rising in time for late fall crappie and walleye fishing.



French Creek rising

## **NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT for October 29, 2012**

Brought to you by PA Great Lakes Region tourism

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

**French Creek** – Flowing through all four counties

Dustin Shay (Meadville) filed 10/26: "I've been archery hunting rather than fishing the last couple weeks. I did have one great day on smallmouth, with several smallies between 14 and 17 inches – taken on live chubs. My brother has been fishing walleyes on the Creek when he has time. Not catching any big ones yet, but getting some small ones on creek-caught shiners."

### **CRAWFORD COUNTY**

#### Pymatuning Lake

Editor's Note: The water level at Pymatuning Lake has been steadily dropping all summer through fall due to lack of summer rainfall (and no snowpack last winter). In recent weeks, anglers have encountered great difficulty getting boats off and on trailers. Many fishermen have thrown in the towel on launching. But the current rains will be revitalizing the fall fishing opportunities on Pymatuning – see message below from park manager.

John Houghton (Pymatuning State Park Manager) filed 10/29: "In my opinion, with rain that is predicted we will be able to reach our normal winter pool level of 1006 – 1006.5 feet ASL. With the shorter days and the ground saturated, this should not be a problem if we do in fact receive the rain predicted from Hurricane Sandy. We will then attempt to maintain that level through the winter season and build up to 1008 foot level in the spring. The lake was down to a level of 1004.91 but today we are at 1005.25 and rising. Jamestown launch appears to be very usable by recent boat traffic and by week's end it should be back to user friendly." Houghton also stated that a rumor that Pymatuning was being drawn down another couple feet to work on the dam was "absolutely false."

Chris Hall (Espyville Outdoors) filed 10/29: "The only reports I have involved anglers catching perch on nightcrawlers from the causeway; been a bad week for fishing."

Ken Smith (Sharon) filed 10/25: "I fished Pymatuning today, 10/25. Fishing was real slow. It took me five hours to put 6 keeper size crappies in the boat. Lots of boats out today, but I didn't see anyone doing anything. Talked to a few guys at the ramp and they had nothing. Hope the bite picks up in the next few days for both crappies and walleyes."

Dan Wielobob (Conneaut Lake) filed 10/25: "Chub Hornstein and I fished Pymatuning yesterday. My trip the previous week only yielded a few perch and couple crappies – no keeper walleyes. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, Chub and I hit our favorite fall spots with blade baits. In several hours of fishing, we caught one legal walleye. There were a number of boats fishing our general area but we did not see one bent rod among them."



Norman Brakeman (Hills County Store) filed 10/17: "Lesley, my son Zac and I were on Pymatuning today, 10/17. We beat the wind by drifting with a drift sock and caught a nice basket of good size perch. The trick was keeping contact with the bottom, using ball jigs tipped with live minnows. We focused on sites where small feeder creeks and ditches dropped into the main river channel."



Working a blade below baitfish

Marilyn Black (Cochranton) filed 10/17: "The morning of 10/17, Darl and I fished Pymatuning for almost four hours, looking for walleyes and crappies using blade baits. There were tremendous baitfish schools visible on our new **Garmin Echo 550c**. Some arches may have been crappies stacked up below baitfish. And a few bottom blimps that may have been walleyes. But nothing appeared to be feeding. We didn't have a single bite the entire morning. There were at least 20 boats in the south end, and I didn't see one person catch a fish."

### Conneaut Lake

Jim Hall (Meadville) filed 10/29: "Little to report. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, I fished Conneaut, catching some pike, small bass, bluegills and perch. The perch and bluegills were in 24 feet of water, caught on pieces of nightcrawler. I'm still looking for that big fall musky."

William Logsdon filed 10/25: "My son and I fished Conneaut Lake last Sunday, 10/21. We only managed 1 largemouth bass on a Zoom Fluke in Baby Bass color. Also had 1 pike follow a lure to the boat. But that was it. We marked a lot of fish but we couldn't get them to bite. We usually do well at Conneaut. When we were taking out at Fireman's Beach, a couple guys from the Pittsburgh area were launching. They had been at Presque Isle Bay in the morning but zeroed out. Where's the fall feeding frenzy? I'll wait to hear some encouraging fishing reports before heading back to Conneaut any more this fall."

Marilyn Black (Cochranton) 10/17: "Following an unsuccessful morning at Pymatuning, we stopped by Conneaut Lake for the late afternoon bite. Darl talked to two guys taking out as we prepared our boat. They had been to Erie in the morning, got blown off and stopped by Conneaut for the afternoon. But they had not had a bite on Conneaut. Darl and I initially fished shallow for smallmouth – but not a single strike, not even from a pike. After seeing good fish marks in the 25 to 40 foot depths – meaning the thermocline had broken – we went deep with new **Binsky Blade Baits** we were testing. Darl hooked one small crappie from 29 feet, released it but it floundered on the surface only feet from the boat. As we prepared to motor over to pick up the crappie, in the corner of my eye I saw what I thought was a gull diving down to grab the fish. However, it was a mature bald eagle which dropped down right beside the boat to take the fish! What a sight! Minutes later it came back and hovered above the water near us looking for another throw-back. Darl snapped a photo on this pass, but we didn't have any more fish to offer it!"



Dan Wielobob (Conneaut Lake) filed 10/17: "I fished Conneaut for a couple hours, searching the deep-water for white bass. No white bass, but I caught a few small crappies on **Vib-E Blade** baits."

## ERIE COUNTY

### Presque Isle Bay

Al Nacopoulos (B.A.C. Bait) filed 10/29: "The word for the Bay is 'Crappies' – some very nice crappies are being taken around docks on emerald shiners, small jigs and **Gulp Alive! Minnows**. There was a nice walleye taken off the North Pier, plus steelhead in Marina Lake and East Pier. Perch fishing has been spotty."

Thomas Watral (Erie) filed 10/19: "I went looking for minnows today at the usual spots, but found no bait. I talked to anglers at the usual spots. An angler on the Border Dock had a nice brown trout. At Mill Creek, I saw an angler catch a steelhead on red egg below a bobber. On South Pier I saw a man with a bass; someone else was catching perch on live minnows. We need cooler temps and rain."

### Lake Erie – Main Lake

Destin DeMarion (Grove City) filed 10/25: "My friend, Justin Lonchar the founder of the Slippery Rock Bass Team and owner of Hookset clothing, invited me to fish Erie for smallmouth with him this past week. We got up there at daybreak and fished until 2 PM. We checked some of his spots and went searching for new stuff, but managed only a few bass. However, we found a pod of quality smallmouth from 3.5 to 5 pounds in 15 to 18 feet of water. I was drop-shotting a goby style bait and throwing **Zerek Innovations Giant Rudy Crankbait**. Justin managed to catch his biggest fish on a **Provider Tackle Smoke Tube**. We fished 6 to 45 feet of water, but only caught bass at 35 feet and 15 to 18 feet. The bite was better in the afternoon." (See Livewell)

### Erie Tributary Streams

Jeff Staaf (Poor Richards Bait) filed 10/29: "Well, the creeks are blown out today and for the next several days as the hurricane rains push in. But as the creeks were rising and getting some color the other day, fishing was good as fresh steelhead began moving in; Black Wooly Buggers for fly fishermen and egg sacks for bait fishermen. If the rains let up by Thursday as predicted, then this coming weekend should be the best fishing of the fall. It will only take 24 to 48 hours for high and muddy tributaries to drop to fishable levels – and there will be whole bunch of fresh steelhead in them! As the water clears some, go to softer colors Wooly Buggers. By the way, last week we weighed our biggest steelhead of the season so far – a 17.5 pounder taken from the mouth of Elk Creek."

Dan Seaman (Elk Creek Sports) filed 10/29: "Two days ago when the rains arrived and the creek started rising, they were catching 14 to 15 pound steelhead. Even though the creeks will be unfishable for several days, we need the additional rain. We had to lose a couple days of angling in order to get a good run of fish into the streams. This rain is also going to clean out the silt that has accumulated for two seasons of low water and flush all the leaves. In that sense, the hurricane was a good thing for us." (See Livewell photo)

Mike Tome (Trout Run Bait) filed 10/29: "High, muddy and over the banks – that's where we will be on Tuesday. But look on the bright side – we needed the water to bring in fish and flush the streams. It will be like new creeks when water recedes with some holed filled in and new ones created. Come next weekend, steelhead will be biting on everything."

Thomas Watral (Erie) filed 10/28

- 10/17 "I went to Four Mile Creek. Not many fish in the creek. Fish were easily spooked. One thing they hit was **Power Bait Honey Worms**. I lost six fish"
- 10/24 "Went to look at Upper Walnut behind the Millcreek Mall. It was low and clear; saw 30 smaller trout; had two fish hit my single red egg."
- 10/28 "Some people had been saying the steelhead run is over for the year since they weren't moving into the streams. But the run is just starting. With this rain, the streams are on the way up the last few days and fish are moving – good numbers in Four Mile, Sixteen Mile and Twenty Mile over the weekend. With rising water, fish are hitting Fire Ball Eggs and Black Woolly Buggers."

Bud Cole (Northampton) filed 10/28: "My friend and I fished the steelhead streams on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. With the water gin clear, fishing was tough. We even fished with a guide on Elk Creek on Thursday afternoon and didn't have a strike. We could see the steelhead stacked up in the deeper pools, but they had no interest in anything. I caught a nice 9 pounder in the lake on Tuesday evening just before dark near the mouth of Trout Run. And one about 4 pounds on Elk Creek before dark on Wednesday. My buddy didn't catch a fish. I attached a photo of my 9 pounder. Everyone was wishing for rain; beware of what you wish for!" (See Livewell photo)

Ed Phillips; filed 10/24: My wife Terry and I went to Twenty Mile Creek on Monday for steelhead. As everyone else has been reporting, the water level was very low, but more importantly, we didn't see many fish. We started at the Tomato Patch and went downstream all the way to the cable. We saw a couple guys with one to three fish, but in most of the holes where we usually see 10 to 30 fish, we didn't see any or only a couple. It was very disappointing. We then went to near the mouth of the creek to check holes that would normally have 20 to 40 fish, but saw only a few. On the positive size, I did manage to land a nice big male brown trout which was my personal best. But in the rush to get him back in the water, I forgot to save the picture to my phone so all I have is his memory."

## MERCER COUNTY

### Shenango Lake

Ken Smith (Sharon) filed 10/26: "I fished Shenango on 10/22 and 1/23. The crappie bite was tough. I noticed there was some kind of bug hatch going on. I did manage to put a few nice fish in the boat both days. Not many over 11 inches – keeping only 9 crappies on Monday and 7 crappies on Tuesday. I got them from areas with rocky bottom rather than mud. **Southern Pro Jigs** tipped with **Berkley Crappie Nibbles** put all the fish in the boat those two days.



Ken's Shenango crappies

"But oh what difference a day or two can make. I fished Shenango today, 10/26, and caught crappies. It was a beautiful morning at 62 degrees and very little wind. Hang sliding **Southern Pro Grubs** over deep open water stumps caught a variety of sizes with lots of keepers. I took 30 crappies off one spot before the bite slowed. I headed to the shoreline stumps and brushpiles, and caught over 20 more on a 1/32 ounce sickle hook jighead with a **Lunker City Fin-S-Fish** body suspended below a bobber. I still love seeing that little bobber disappear when the slab grabs the jig. Water temp was 58 degrees at noon when I finished for the day. There's still some good fishing to come."

## Lake Wilhelm

Bob Mohra (Fergie's Bait) filed 10/29: "The only reports coming to the shop regard the bluegills being caught around Launch #4. Hardly anyone fishing Wilhelm this fall."

## **VENANGO COUNTY**

### Allegheny River

Jody Maurer (Maurer's Trading Post) filed 9/28: "I'm new to this email stuff. I would very much like to participate in your Fishing Reports. What I'm seeing right now is a decrease in number of anglers on the water due to archery season and small game hunting. The diehard fishermen are picking up walleye in the river and in French Creek, mainly on jig-n-curl tail or jig-n-minnow. I talked to two fishermen who caught legal muskies – one on a Sucker-colored **Grandma Lure** and the other on a **Black Mepps Muskie Spinner**; both muskies were released to fight another day. Some walleye and smallmouth are being caught on **Gitzit** type tube jigs. "

Lou Letterle (Franklin) filed 10/29: "I fished the Allegheny a couple times in the last week. I caught a few decent fish, but overall I have struggled to catch very many bass, and in my last three trips I did not even catch a walleye. For me, the artificial baits are currently out-producing live creek chubs and suckers. The few fish I have caught came on **Winco's River Darters**, 4-inch grubs and **Yamamoto Senko** worms rigged wacky-style. However, I continue to catch my share of weeds and leaves!" (See Livewell photos)

Gene Winger (Oil City) filed 10/29:

- 10/18: "Water temperature was in the lower 50 degree range and with an afternoon storm forecast, I decided to fish the deeper pool in the Reno Eddy. Using **Winco's River Darter**, **Winco's Swim Bait** and **Winco's CW "Smallies"** in ten feet of water, I picked up two nice bass. As the wind increase I moved up river to the Oil City Eddy picking up numerous bass in 16 to 20 feet of water using **CW "Smallies"** and **Winco's Undulator Jigs**. It seems smaller jigs fished on the bottom with slow drag-stop-drag retrieve was the killer combination for the day. I landed over 15 bass before the storm chased me off. Everyone talks about how great the Fall Bite is on the Allegheny River... now I'm a believer!"
- 10/25: "George Sisul and I fished a full day on the Oil City Eddy. Focusing on the deeper sections of the river, George used live minnows on a dropshot rig and I used Winco's CW "Smallies" and Undulator Jigs. Live minnows produced four bass and a catfish for George, and I landed ten bass and missed about that many on jigs. Over all, we were impressed with the size of the bass, ranging from 2.5 to 4.5 pounds – good indicator that Catch and Release fishing is positive on the river." (See Livewell for photos)

Steve Udick (Oil City) filed 10/28: "On Wednesday, 10/24, my wife Sharon and I fished the lower end of Rockmere, catching 14 smallmouth bass – 13 of them behind one rock! All were from 15 to 17 inches. All fish came on **Zoom Super Flukes** in Watermelon Candy, Watermelon Magic or Disco Violet; my wife had never thrown Flukes for bass before. On 10/26, I fished with Dave Rembold of Rockmere. We fished all his favorite spots in the upper eddy, catching only three bass. Winds, leaves and grass were terrible. It was so bad you could not complete a retrieve without fouling. I had to clean the jet intake out seven times. Walleye season is on us now, once the river gets flushed out from this storm I will be back running **Rapala Shad Raps** for the late season."



Steve finishes strong; photo

Dale Black (Oil City) filed 10/22: "I fished the Allegheny on 10/21 in my boat, while Darl Black and Jonathan Custead fished out of Darl's boat. Darl caught his largest river smallmouth of the year – a 20-incher – on a **Get Bit Tube** and lost a couple other big ones at the boat. I landed about 25 bass, plus a four pounder which jumped by the boat and got off. All fish came by shaking a **Yum Dinger** on the bottom." (See Livewell photos)

Destin DeMarion (Grove City) filed 10/22: "Entered in the Bassmasters of Crawford County tournament on Sunday, I fished the river from my boat for the first time. Even though a tournament, it was sort of practice day since I had not fished here before. It ended up a very fun day, figuring out new water. My four bass limit went 11.10 pounds and I had two over 3 pounds. I caught most of the bass by drop-shotting various minnow-like soft plastic but my biggest smallmouth came on a **BPS XPS Swimbait**." (See Livewell photo)

Duff Kerle, filed 10/22: "I fished the Bassmasters of Crawford County tournament on the Allegheny River on 10/21. Ben Lipiec won with four smallmouths weighing just over 14 pounds. I had lunker with a 5.94 smallmouth taken on a **Berkley Gulp 3" Leech**. Congratulations to Eric Marsh for getting Angler of the Year." (See Livewell photo)

(Editor's Note: Duff's lunker bass is the heaviest officially weighed smallmouth coming out of the Middle Allegheny that I am aware of in the 20 years I've been fishing the river. Congratulations Duff!)

## LIVEWELL OVERFLOW starts here with Erie fish



Bud Cole with steelhead



Ed Lawrence with steelhead



Elk Creek Sports photo of customer with brown trout



Justin Lonchar with smb

# The Livewell

Brought to you by:



Allegheny River smallmouth fishing has been great in October with many above average bass caught, including a 5.94 pounder taken by Duff Kerle. Look at that weigh again...that is just a hair shy of 6 pounds! Lake Erie size bass in the Middle Allegheny River!



Boat of the Month: Rogue Fastwater, 22' 6L V8 380 HP; top, side curtains and heat; Perfect wintertime walleye river jetboat.



Gene Winger with 3.5 pounder



Lou Letterle continues to rack up bass on soft plastic



Jonathan Custead



Dale Black all shook up



Destin DeMarion with assistant to hold his bass

PROCESSED FOR PERFORMANCE



## Gamma Line's Fishing Tips for NW PA Waters

**Fishing Tip - Report contributor Gene Winger wins a spool of Gamma Polyflex Line for his tip:**

"I'm not your typical rookie bass fisherman. When I turned 60, I decided to purchase a jet boat and get into the river fishing – to gear up for retirement. The first thing I did was drain my bank account at Cabela's on spinnerbaits, crankbaits and spinners – you name it, I purchased it. The problem was all those fancy lures were not catching many bass. Then I started reading the NW PA Fishing Report, and it seemed river bass anglers were using soft plastic baits like wacky worms, Predator Craws, River Darters and other soft jerkbaits. I contacted Al Winco whose products were frequently mentioned by anglers. Al was willing to spend time discussing his products and explaining how to use them! Bottom line, I'm now hooked on Winco's Custom Baits and my bass fishing has improved 10 fold. If you want to catch smallmouth as the water cools down next month, check out some of Winco's Custom Baits specifically made for coldwater smallmouth, including Chillee Willee/Undulator Finesse Kit, CW Smallie Delight and Rabbit Hare Jigs."



**Lure prize pack for this issue of Fishing Report supplied by: Gene Larew Lures**

Included are a pack of Biffle Bugs, a pack of the new Rattlin' Crawler and pack of Hardhead football heads. The hardhead is the lure which bass pro Tommy Biffle has used the last four years to win over \$400,000.00! Tommy says it is an easy lure to fish: "Rig a Biffle But or Rattlin' Crawler on the Hardhead, cast it out, let it settle to the bottom, and simply wind it back while keeping contact with the bottom."

**The winner drawn for the lure prize pack is: Duff Kerle**

**Important Notice from PA Fish & Boat Commission: Beginning November 1 and lasting through April 30, boaters are required to wear a life jacket while underway or at anchor on boats less than 16 feet in length or any canoe or kayak, under a new state regulation.**

**Obtain the PGLR fishing brochure "Reel It In!" at [www.pagreatlakes.com](http://www.pagreatlakes.com)**