

Northwest Pennsylvania Fishing Report



Reporting Date:

December 21, 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, complied 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

We have ice! Well, maybe. The fall cool down was slow in coming, then we got slammed with winter storm after winter storm – six of them before the First Day of Winter — which by the way is today! We were headed to record early ice but a snow layer on thin ice prevented the larger lakes from achieving safe ice. By the way, the standard minimal thickness for one or two people walking on ice is 4 inches of solid clear-blue. But now with the warm up and rain which started yesterday and is expected to continue through Sunday is going to make most ice-covered lakes unsafe. And if temps drop below freezing this coming week, lakes are going to be a mess with a thin layer of ice over several inches of water to a bottom layer of ice. However, the silver lining to the rain will be a blow out of ice on the Erie steelhead streams. Fishable open streams by the 25th could be a Christmas gift to steelheaders!



NW PA FISHING REPORT: 12/21/13 – FIRST DAY OF WINTER

Brought to you by PA GREAT LAKES REGION

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

FRENCH CREEK – Flowing through all four counties

Angler Al (Franklin) filed 12/12: "My brother-in-law and I were out over Thanksgiving on Oil Creek and French Creek. Although conditions weren't the best and we didn't catch a lot of fish, nonetheless we valued our time as special. Oil Creek's snow covered backdrop was spectacular, as I snapped a picture of Dr. Amal "Doc" Das making a presentation. Good ole French Creek came through for us. We managed to land several small pike, but two large fish escaped. One was most likely a big musky, as it took the biggest chub I had and took off across the eddy stripping line. Also I lost a 25" plus walleye at my feet! Here's wishing everyone a happy holiday season!" (Al Bell's photos)



CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Dave Richter (Richter's Tackle Shop) filed 12/19: "I had a report of several anglers catching good walleyes in the Shenango River below Pymatuning Dam. However, no one is out on the ice at Pymatuning that I am aware of. Heck, guys aren't even fishing through the ice off the Jamestown Marina Docks."

Chris Hall (Espyville Outdoors) filed 12/19: "The ice isn't safe on this end of lake. I have not seen anyone out on it, and no one has stopped by for bait to fish the lake."

Hooker (Hill's County Store) filed 12/18: "I'll be ice-fishing in the Keys for Christmas! But here's my present to you..."

Hooker's Christmas Wish

'Twas the night before Christmas and all over the lake,

The anglers used bait that the fish would not take.

Tackle boxes were filled with great care.

Jigs tied with plastic, feather and hair.

With Les in her rain suit and me in my coat,

We took all those boxes and loaded the boat.

We went to some brush piles with ice on their twigs,

And started to dangle some Baby Shad jigs.

The lake was calm, with a big star for our light,

Until my bobber twitched, signaling the bite!

The fight was on.

I had to move quick!

With a flick and a swoosh, there's a bend in my stick!

A zig and a zag - there's a silvery-flash,

The next thing I see is the slab crappie splash.

The battle is on, it's not easy to land.

But with a big smile, I had the big fish in my hand!

After high-fives and giggles it started to snow.

I knew right then, I must let this one go.



I thought that I heard

As it swam out of sight --

Merry Christmas to all....and to all, a good bite!

"Hooker" Brakeman

ERIE COUNTY

Presque Isle Bay

Al Nacopoulos (B.A.C. Bait) filed 12/19: "As of today, we have no safe ice on the Bay. Some customers have reported areas of 1.5" of ice with 10 inches of snow on it. No one is out fishing on it."

Thomas Watral (Erie)

- Filed 12/13: "Still lots of open water areas on the Bay, with open water fishing available from some docks. The perch and crappie are on fire when the winds are not blowing. The hotspots are Marina Docks and South Pier. Fish are hitting live and salted minnows. Lake burbot are hitting bigger minnows."

- Filed 12/12: "Lake Pleasant has safe ice – reportedly 8 inches – but take precautions. Crappie, perch and trout are hitting. Crappie and perch are in the weedbeds, while the trout are beyond the weeds towards the center of the lake. Steelheads are in the mouth of Mill Creek, hitting single eggs, grubs and minnows on Mini Foo Jigs under a bobber."

Erie Tributary Streams

Ric Gauriloff (Trout Run Bait) filed 12/12: "Not much happening up here right now. Ice fishing should start soon. Perch are hitting in the Bay, but there are lots of small ones. Plenty of steelhead in the creeks; anglers who are going are catching some fish, but the streams are slushy and icing over. We are having fly-tying classes this winter at the store. New classes each month in January, February and March; Beginners and Advanced in separate classes. Information is online on our website, or stop by the store."

Jeff (Poor Richards) filed 12/18: "Streams have iced up. But with the warming trend and rain this weekend, it could blow the streams open. If the creeks open up, they will be a mess for a day or so. Hopefully we are looking at middle of next week – perhaps Christmas – as being fishable."

Dan Seaman (Elk Creek Sports) filed 12/18: "What's the forecast for the steelhead streams given the warm up and rain? Depends on how hard and how long it rains. Temperature alone isn't going to do much. We have 20 inches of snow. We will need 6-7-8 hours of steady rain to blow up the streams. Then if it turns cold again as predicted, we get a week or so of fishing before they freeze up again. However, if we get the rain as predicted, I'm guessing the streams may blow out on Saturday or Sunday but they will be too high, too muddy and too filled with debris to fish for 24 to 48 hours. Maybe anglers will be back on them on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Of course, you always have the option of going to 16 Mile Creek which never freezes due to warm water discharges from North East."

Scott Kinard (Butler) filed 12/5: With his boats winterized, Scott said his only option was to go steelhead fishing..."I went up last Friday and took a nice hike from NY along 20 Mile Creek and then finished the day walking out to a grand view of Lake Erie at sunset. I saw a number of steelhead pods in the low clear

water. All fish (browns and steelhead) were very spooked. Never had a hit but a nice winter hike with grand view of sunset at end of day." (See Scott's photos below)



John Wilpula (Conneaut Lake) filed 12/5: "On November 16, we took advantage of the warm spell to get the boys out on the tributaries for their first steelhead. We started fishing around 6:30 a.m. but the action was slow through the morning. With snacks and short hikes to break things up, they hung in there like champs. Sometime during mid-afternoon the fish turned on like a switch had been flipped. We started getting hits on every 5th cast or so. It was fantastic! My goal for the entire season was to have each boy take their first steelhead and for me to take my first lake-run brown trout. That all happened within the course of about 40 minutes! We were catching fish on a black hand-tied marabou jig tipped with a fathead minnow." (John Wilpula photos below)



MERCER COUNTY

Shenango River Lake



Ken Smith (Sharon) filed 12/18: "I fished the Golden Run area of Shenango Lake today. Ice was a solid 4 inches with a dusting of snow from overnight. With the lake being 7 feet below summer pool, it was difficult finding water deeper than 9 feet on the flats – unless you approached the channel. However, ice over the channel is much thinner because of moving water. So we hunkered down in 8 feet over some sunken brush. We fished jigs with plastic and tipped them with one maggot. Three of us caught over 40 crappies and 'gills but not many of good size. Ron kept some for a quick fish fry." (Ken Smith photos)



Buhl Lake

From a PFBC News Release: Buhl Lake will be part of the 2014 Mentored Youth Fishing Days. Youth anglers accompanied by an adult angler will be able to fish Buhl Lake for trout on April 5, the weekend before traditional opening day of trout season. Youth anglers must obtain a free PFBC-issued permit, which will be available beginning Feb. 1, 2014 at www.GoneFishinPA.com.

VENANGO COUNTY

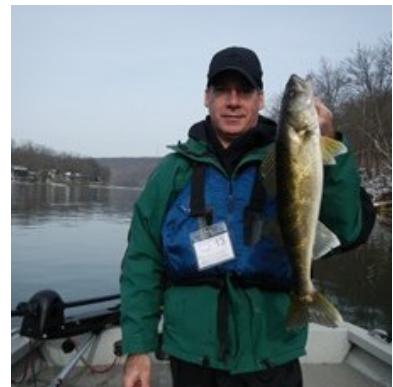
Kahle Lake

Frank Malek (Oil City) filed 12/18: "I've been to Kahle Lake ice fishing. Ice is 3 to 3.5 inches thick. Lots of big perch, a few crappies and some pretty good bluegills; got a few small bass, too. First two fish of the day were nice walleyes but could not get them through the hole. I've been fishing Swedish Pimples and small Marmouska Jigs tipped with maggots. And I was using 4-pound test Gamma Ice Line. I'm on the ice again today, and getting them good. Get out ASAP because the ice will be gone with upcoming rain."

Allegheny River



Lou Letterle (Franklin) filed 12/12: "I made it out on the Allegheny River last Wednesday, December 4. It was a warm day but the water temperature only rose to 38 degrees. I didn't catch anything until 1 p.m. then ended up with 8 fish over the next hour. The catch included 3 smallmouth bass, 3 walleyes and 2 pike. I caught the fish on large creek chubs – but detecting the bite was difficult. No size to the fish, yet it was an enjoyable day on the water. I saw about half dozen other boats out. However, I have now thrown in the towel and my boat is getting winterized". (Lou Letterle photos)



Editor's note: I've thrown in the towel on river fishing, too, this year and had my jet winterized. All slow moving pools were iced over completely on Thursday when I took my boat to Wiegel Brother's Marine. But following a night of rain, on her way to the office on Friday morning Marilyn reported the ice at Oil City was breaking up some and a boat was launching at the ramp!

Summary of a News Release from the PA Fish & Boat Commission everyone needs to know about...

Harrisburg, PA (Dec. 17) - An initiative by Gov. Tom Corbett to safely dispose of unused and expired prescription and over-the-counter medicine also will improve the health of fish, says the executive director of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC).

PFBC Executive Director John Arway explains that research shows once prescription drugs and other medicines end up in our waterways, they are being absorbed by fish. "Low doses of these drugs can ultimately harm fish. For example, we have seen a greater frequency of an intersex condition in smallmouth bass in the Susquehanna River, with males showing signs of eggs in their reproductive systems and having a protein in their system that should only occur in females. We have also found sores and lesions on fish, which may be due to exposure of these fish these drugs."

People should no longer flush expired medicines down the toilet or wash them down the drain because wastewater treatment plants are not designed to remove them before they get into a nearby stream.

Gov. Corbett's plan includes 250 secure medicine return boxes throughout Pennsylvania. To find a MedReturn box in your area, visit www.ddap.pa.gov.

The Livewell

Brought to you by:



The entire crew at Wiegel Brothers Marine
wishes everyone a Very Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year. See you in 2014!



Skip Simmons says winter is Steelhead Time



Rising trout by Kirby Neubert at North County Creations

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Gamma Fishing Tips

Dale Black, President of Black Knight Industries, reminds anglers that Gamma not only makes exceptional lines for open-water fishing, but also offers specialized monofilament and fluorocarbon ice lines. "With ice fishing just getting started, now is the time to spool up with Gamma ESP Ice or Gamma Fluorocarbon Ice. Our ESP Ice lines range from 10 lb. test down to 1 lb. test to meet your exact needs. And don't forget to stock up on our Frog Hair Steelhead Leaders to be prepared for when Erie tributaries open up."



Ho! Ho! Ho! From the staff at Black Knight Technologies, we wish everyone a Very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Winner of the spool of Gamma Line for this issue of Fishing Report: John Wilpula

Winner of the Prize Pack of Baits for this issue of the Fishing Report: Ken Smith

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

