

NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT

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

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. In providing information or pictures, you are agreeing to your comments being edited, and posted to websites and distributed electronically.

The NW PA Fishing Report is brought to you by:

Pennsylvania' Great Lakes Region (www.PaGreatLakes.com)

Black Knight Industries, Oil City (www.GammaFishing.com)

Wiegel Brothers Marine, Franklin (www.wiegelbrothersmarine.com)

The Landing Net

by Darl Black

I am thoroughly tired of winter's cold, snow and ice! I am ready for the Spring Thaw and open-water fishing! Ice cover on lakes is not as thick as last year so hopefully lakes will be ice free by the end of March. I've got my fingers crossed that I'll be on the Allegheny River by St. Patrick's Day, if not before! Speaking of ice out, we are having a contest to guess the length of the first smallmouth bass and first crappie that I catch in open water. Complete details can be found on Page 8 of this issue of the NW PA Fishing Report. All guesses must be made through the "Email Us" button on the www.BlackwolfeCommunications.website. Anyone can enter and winning prize packets are certainly worth the little effort involved to visit the website.



NW PA FISHING REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 16, 2015

This Report is brought to you by PA Great Lakes Region tourism with additional sponsorship from Wiegel Brothers Marine and Gamma Fishing.

We answer the question "What's biting in the lakes, streams and rivers of Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango counties?"

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

(Editor's note: I attempted to reach Pymatuning Lake on Saturday, February 14 to photograph the winners of the PLA Ice Fishing Tournament, but turned back due to white-out conditions making the drive dangerous. I later heard from ice fishermen on the lake that the wind was so bad their ice huts took off across the lake; others reported being separated from their group due to low visibility. As of publication time, I have not received results from the PLA tournament.)

Patty @ Poff's Place; filed 2/16: "There are some very experienced anglers catching walleye through the ice but for the most part, I'm only hearing about less than stellar catches. Even with all the ice this year, most people don't seem to be connecting with fish. Better days are coming, however. Hopefully ice-out is only about four weeks away!"



Rich Sari photo



Rich Sari photo



Chuck Sari photo



Chuck Sair photo

Rich Sari (Ohio)

- Filed 1/19: "Went to Pymatuning Saturday 1/17 and again the morning of the 19th with my grandson Jake. Ice is still a little shaky. You must be cautious. Most places have four inches of good ice under slush, water and snow. There is still no one on the south end below Snodgrass. There is a lot of water on top of the ice at the south end. There are a few fishermen around Manning, Tuttle, Westford and Snodgrass. Catches are spotty, but if you have the patience and a little skill, there are walleye to be caught. We got seven 'eye on Saturday ranging from 16 inches to 24 inches. Caught quite a few smaller throw-backs. This morning we did about the same. Attached is a picture of my grandson with the four he caught, ranging from 18 to 25 inches."
- Filed 2/14: "It really got bad out on the ice today. I didn't stick around to get my limit, but between Jake and me, we got 10 walleye. Jake got a 27 incher which was the biggest. I got a 23 incher and a 22 incher – which are really nice Pymatuning walleye. Our ten keepers ranged from 16 inches to 27 inches. See attached photos. We have been doing very well all year on walleyes. If you put in the time and effort, a limit of walleyes can be the norm for an ice angler on Pymatuning." (See photos)

Chuck Sari (Franklin); filed 2/13: "I have made several trips to Pymatuning fishing strictly for walleyes with my cousin Rich Sari. We have had very good success fishing the north end of the lake using Sonars. The attached pictures are from a trip on February 7th fishing with my son Kevin and my grandson Reece. Reece is holding a very fat 22 inch walleye that took him 10 minutes to land. We have also been fishing Shenango Lake at Golden Run for crappies with some success using 1/32 oz. jigs tipped with a mag-got." (See photos)

Loby (Conneaut Lake); filed 2/10: "I've been jigging blades at Pymatuning to catch walleyes, including the Vibe-B and BPS XSP Lazer blade in sizes 1/4 and 3/8 ounce. Gold is my favorite color." (see photos)

Lake Canadohta

An ice fishing tournament sponsored by Timberland Bait Shop was held at Canadohta Lake on February 14. Sara @ Timberland Bait sent photos of the winner in each species category; but she only identified Joe Fink of Pittsburgh as the first place winner of \$350 for a 28-3/4 inch northern pike. (See photos)

Woodcock Lake

Trevor Pavlik; filed 2/16: "I caught two muskies at Woodcock this past week. I was jigging live minnows on a Swedish Pimple and fishing big shiners on the tip-ups. We were fishing on a drop that went from 10 feet to 20 feet. The larger musky was 48 inches and the smaller one was 32.5 inches." (See photos)

Sugar Lake

Angler Al (Franklin); filed 1/24: "On January 22nd my neighbor Luke and I rode our snowmobiles over to Sugar Lake. The ice was 7 inches thick, but with a layer of slush on top. Other sleds had been on the ice, so we motored out to see what the two men nearest the hotel might be catching. Turned out they were fellows I knew from the Shipperville area – Daryl and Von. They had caught a few perch on minnows before I arrived. However while visiting with them, one of Von's tip-ups went off. He tugged once on the braided line and said "This ain't no perch." His Fireline held true and he worked a two-foot fish out of the hole. Initially believing it was a funny looking musky, it turned out to be later identified as 24 inch Chain Pickerel!" (See photo)



24 inch Pickerel

Loby photos of Pymi 'eye



Pavlik photos of muskies



48" from Woodcock

ERIE COUNTY

Tributaries

Jeff @ Poor Richard's Bait Shop; filed 2/16: "A few anglers are ice fishing for steelhead at the mouths of Elk and in Walnut Creek Marina. An occasional small fresh steelhead is caught, and sometimes it's a dark fish that has been in for some time. They are catching them on jigs tipped with a minnow, wax worm or grub."

Presque Isle Bay

RJ Graham (Tionesta); filed 2/16: "I went up to PIB on Saturday the 14th. We got some 'gills and perch, but the bite was slow and the wind was high. After our ice hut sailed across the bay when we walked out of it, we decided to call it a day."

Thomas Watral (Erie)

- Filed 1/23: "Ice thickness 5 to 8 inches. Hot spot for perch is straight out of Chestnut Street Ramp in mid-section of Bay. Best set-up is Subiki Rig with minnows on 6 to 8-pound test line. Perch are running 9 to 14 inches.
- Filed 1/24: "Got a picture of red fox today by the ship yard; I gave the fox one of my fish. The ice is 10 inches thick. We only managed 10 perch all about 9 inches – slow day.
- Filed 2/2: "The ice is anywhere from 7 to 12 inches thick. Perch fishing has been picking up early in the mornings. Hot spot is the middle of the Bay. Crappies are being caught in the Stink Hole; best baits are ice jigs tipped with maggots under a bobber. Some steelhead reported at Four Mile Creek and Walnut Creek on single eggs and roe."
- Filed 2/9: "Down to Dobbins Landing to ice fish for perch. Lot of anglers out but hardly anyone catching decent perch. I managed a limit of perch - barely 9 inches long. On Subiki Rigs tipped with minnows. I've been told the fishing is slow in Misery Bay."
- File 2/12: "I went out on the Bay today and tried six different areas. Every place was slow. Hardly any hits. No one I talked to was doing any good. Even talked to a man that has been out on the ice every day since it froze; he said he only limited out one time. Certainly not as good as last year."

MERCER COUNTY

Shenango River Lake

Chuck Sari (Franklin); filed 2/15: "I fished Shenango Lake yesterday with Kevin and Reece. We fished the Swim Beach area. We brought home 60 nice crappies – all caught on small jigs tipped with maggots. There were three other guys fishing near us; they had about 30 crappies and bluegills. We fished until noon and then the wind got too bad; it literally blew us off the ice.

Ken Smith (Sharon)...

- Filed 2/7: "On February 6, I fished Shenango Lake's Golden Run area for panfish with a couple of buddies. Our group drilled lots of holes searching for fish. After drilling about 40 holes and checking depths from 4 feet to 9 feet, we found some brush in 8 feet near the channel. The crappies were stacked there. We caught well over 150 fish between three of us; most of the fish

were between 7 and 11 inches. Quite a few thick black 9-inch crappies were taken home for a fish fry. I caught all of mine on small plastic baits but my buddy Ron and Steve used maggots on Swedish Pimples and Fiskas Jigs."

- File 2/9: "I had so much fun on the 8th, that I invited my buddy Al to come down from Saegertown since he had never fished Shenango on the ice. We went back to the same areas fished a couple days earlier and drilled holes all around the area looking for the school of crappies. After more than 20 holes and fishing them for over an hour, we decided to check an area that had produced for me in the past. I drilled ten holes, while Al checked each for brush...and found some. We set up on it and started hammering crappies. Again, they averaged a little over nine inches but they were biting good and fast. We caught over 80 crappies, with Al keeping 20 of them; I kept 30 for our upcoming church Fish Fry. About 90% of the crappies came on plastic, with the other 10% on maggots."



Smith's Shenango crappies

Lake Wilhelm

Vickie @ Fergie's Bait Shop; filed 1/29: "Here is what was happening on Lake Wilhelm the end of January. Ice was 6-1/2 inches. Anglers were picking up perch and bluegills at Bachop Road and accesses #1, #2 and #3. At accesses #1 and #2 they were picking up good size crappies in 7 to 8 feet of water, just off the bottom. Water clarity is between 1 to 3 feet. Grubs and wax worms on a Horrobin Ant seemed to work best, plus minnows."

Neshannock Creek

Bob at Neshannock Creek Fly Shops; filed 1/22: "We are only a couple months away from the official start of trout season. Our annual pre-Season Trout Stocking will be Saturday, March 7. We will again be open every Sunday beginning on March 8. The Lunker Stock and Rod Raffle is Saturday, March 14; winner does not need to be present and gets their choice of any Orvis 2015 Recon Fly Rod. I am seeking volunteers age 18 and up to help us float-stock on both Saturday, March 7 and Saturday March 14. We are also taking reservations for Female Anglers Fly Fishing School, Young Anglers Fly Fishing School, Fly Fishing Lessons and Guided Fly Fishing. Details on any of the above items can be found at our website www.ncflyshop.com."

VENANGO COUNTY

Bill @ Griffins Bait & Tackle Shop; file 2/12: "Here at Griffins Bait & Tackle we have been selling a lot of maggots, wax worms, shiners and fathead minnows. We have been getting new products in, including Arnold, DOT, Moon, and Ratso ice jigs in sizes 10-14. Griffins now offers GAMMA line in sizes 6, 8 and 10 pound test in the pony spools or filler spools. We are now able to purchase K&E Stopper products – mostly ice fishing lures, accessories and equipment. Griffins also will be handling HT products. With temperatures staying below 32 degrees, ice fishermen have been reporting nice catches. Sugar Lake has been producing crappies in the 10 to 11 inch range. Alex and Bob Keith have been catching pike and walleye on frozen sections of French Creek. Also good catches from the Allegheny River, including Bob's northern pike at 33 inches, Matty's northern pike at 32 inches, and Ryan's musky at 35 inches – all taken on February 8th."

2015 Erie Ice Camp hosted by Dave Lefebre



Pro angler Dave Lefebre hosted his second annual Ice Camp in late January, inviting several national outdoor communicators for a three day ice fishing event on different area lakes. Attending outdoor writers/photographers included Jeff Samsel (Georgia), Steve Chaconas (Virginia), Todd Ceisner (New York), and Darl Black (Pennsylvania).

Preliminary plans had called for visiting media to fish Pymatuning Lake and Shenango Lake for crappies, but the ice was not considered safe enough at the time on these lakes. Instead, ice fishing took place on Presque Isle Bay and Lake Pleasant – lakes which had six to eight inches of solid ice.

The week prior to the Ice Camp, Lefebre had been limiting out on crappies at PIB for three days in a row. But everyone knows exceptional fishing does not last. This is especially true when outdoor media comes to town! Day One on PIB yielded only one crappie, although bluegills and small perch were actively taking baits.



Day Two was a jaunt down the road to Pleasant Lake. Writers dabbling in the holes on Pleasant were rewarded with yellow perch of a size far superior to the ones taken at PIB. Late in the day, Lefebre discovered some of the lake's famed trout were hovering over the deepwater basin. So on Day Three, everyone returned to Pleasant to focus on roaming trout suspended several feet down over 40 feet of water. This was far different approach than fishing the weed edge!

Everyone departed with ample material and photos for future articles on NW PA ice fishing.

The Livewell

Brought to you by:

Wiegel Brothers Marine
704 ½ Elk Street
Franklin, PA 16323
814-437-2077

www.wiegelbrothersmarine.com
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Boat of the Month: This 19' PolarKraft is completely outfitted and ready to fish big water.—from Lake Erie walleye to Lake Raystown stripers. This lightly used 2011 boat taken in on a trade; there is barely a scratch on it. The boat is equipped with everything—you've got to see it to believe it!

Results from Timberland Bait's Canadohta Ice Fishing Tournament. Timberland will hold it's

Conneaut Lake Tourney on Feb. 28; visit their website for details.



French Creek and Allegheny River Ice Fishing photos submitted by Griffins Bait and Tackle



Alex



Bob Keith



Bob



Mattie



In order to celebrate the official launch of www.BlackwolfeCommunications.com website and “Fishing with Darl Black” Guide Service this spring, we are having a contest!

I will give away two prize packs of lures. One will be a selection of smallmouth bass baits, and the second will be a prize pack of crappie baits. Retail value of each pack will be at least \$25. The winner will be based on the closest guess in inches to the first Smallmouth Bass and first Crappie which Darl catches after ice-out.

For complete details, read the February 17th issue of the NW PA Fishing Report on-line at www.BlackwolfeCommunications.com or visit the February 18th blog post at www.darblack.blogspot.com.

Darl's First Fish of the 2015 Open Water Season Contest!!!!

The winner in each category will be based on guessing the length of the first 2015 Pennsylvania Smallmouth Bass which Darl Black catches in open water after ice out, and the length of the first 2015 Pennsylvania Crappie which Darl Black catches after ice out. Whoever is fishing with Darl at the time will measure and photograph the fish. Make your length guess in inches to the nearest 1/4-inch.

The tie breaker will be the type of lure (be specific) used to catch the first fish of each species. If multiple entries are still tied, then a random drawing will determine the winner.

Now, this is very important. The only way you can enter is through the www.BlackwolfeCommunications.com website. Do not send entries via my Windstream.net email. Only guesses coming from the [BlackwolfeCommunications.com](http://www.BlackwolfeCommunications.com) website are valid.

Go to www.BlackwolfeCommunications.com; check out Smallmouth Quest, Crappie Quest, and the Fishing with Darl Black Guide Service Page. Next press the “Email Us” or “Contact Us” button and enter the required information. Then enter your guess for the contest in the body of the message by listing the following information:

- Your name
- Your contact email
- Your guess in inches to the nearest 1/4" for either the first **Smallmouth Bass** or first **Crappie** which Darl catches in Pennsylvania after 2015 Ice-Out on northwestern lakes or rivers.
- As a tie-breaker, list the lure you believe Darl will be using when he catches the first Smallmouth bass or Crappie.

Then figure out the *captcha* code and hit submit. You may only make a guess on one species per “Contact Us” email. However you may enter for both Smallmouth Bass and Crappie in separate emails. No ballot stuffing please! One guess per specie for each individual.

NOTE: Look for hints for the possible ice-out lure which might be used by reading Smallmouth Quest and Crappie Quest sections of the website.

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Black Knight Industries

Oil City, PA 16301

www.gammafishing.com

www.froghairfishing.com



Gamma Fishing Tip



Pro bass angler Paul Mueller of Connecticut qualified for the 2015 Bassmaster Classic by winning the 2014 B.A.S.S. Nation Championship. This is the second year in a row that Paul has qualified for the Classic via the B.A.S.S. Nation system. At the 2014 Classic, Paul finished 2nd place.

In this issue of the NW PA Fishing Report, Paul talks about which Gamma Lines he will likely be employing at the 2015 Bassmaster Classic.

The majority of Paul's spinning outfits will be spooled with either 10 or 15-pound Gamma Torque Braid, with Gamma Edge as a leader. The pound-test leader will depend on the application. For example, his drop-shot rod will have 10-pound Torque with a 10-foot 6-pound Edge leader. On his shaky worm outfit, the reel will be spooled with 15-pound Torque with an 8-pound Edge leader. Edge and Torque will be joined together with back-to-back Uni knots.

"Using braid with a fluorocarbon leader provides better feel, especially when fishing deep water, and offers much better hooksets. It's the perfect combination."

(Continued on the next page)

You can find Gamma Line locally at the following tackle shops

Consumer Direct Sports—Grove City, PA

Griffins Bait and Tackle—Cooperstown, PA

Hill's County Store—Williamsfield, OH

The winner of the spool of Gamma Line for this issue of the Fishing Report is Trevor Pavlik.

If you are the winner of this issue's Gamma Line sample spool, please email your shipping address to Darl Black to claim your prize, along with desire type of line (Polyflex, Edge, Touch, Torque) and pound-test.

While trying to develop a shallow pattern at Lake Hartwell, Paul says he will be throwing a crankbait on 10-pound Gamma Edge. "Edge is a great cranking line because it has less stretch than Polyflex and it sinks, thereby providing a bit more depth for my bait. With lower stretch, Edge fluorocarbon also provides more feel to let you know what the crankbait is doing and the line is invisible in water."

These are the same reasons he uses 8-pound test Edge on his jerkbait rod and 14-pound Edge on his deep-water football jighead rod.

"Due to Gamma's incredible strength per its diameter, I am able to use lighter pound-test in Gamma's lineup than I would if using another company's line. To sum it up, Gamma puts more fish in the boat for me."

Gamma Line President Dale Black wishes the best to Paul and all the Gamma Pro Staff members fishing the Bassmaster Classic this week.

RUMORS...and the rest of the story

In angling, you come to expect the occasional rumor about exceptionally big fish. Some turn out to be true; some do not. On January, someone emailed me about a rumor of a 20 pound walleye taken through the ice at Justus Lake supposedly the week before. Putting out feelers among the Fishing Report contributors who frequent Justus Lake, we tracked it down. Yes, there had been a 19 pound 8 ounce walleye measuring 35 inches taken at Justus Lake...but not this year. Rather it was a fish taken in 2010. Apparently someone saw the picture of either at the Nature Center at Justus Lake or at Jigger Tackle in Franklin. Mike Horrobin sent me faded picture of the fish, at which point I remember reporting on in the Fishing Report 5 years ago. Yes, it would have been a new state record had the angler turned followed up with official paperwork.



Last week, I received a call from a fishing report contributor asking if I knew anything about a 49 pound musky taken through the ice at Lake Arthur. After numerous phone calls, I discovered from a park ranger at Moraine State Park that Nick Colangelo had caught a 53.5 inch musky at Arthur a few days before. A picture was made available through Facebook. Since the musky was released, the fish apparently was not weighed and someone was guessing at the weigh. However, after seeing two good photos of the fish, it does not appear to me to be a 49 pound fish—although I could be wrong. A day later, two Fishing Report contributors sent a link to an internet news organization called the Blaze that ran a story and photo of the big fish and Nick, saying the fish had been taken at Pymatuning. Anyone with knowledge of Pymatuning shoreline would clearly recognize the backdrop was not Pymatuning. Where the Blaze journalist came up with Pymatuning as the site is the real mystery.



But there are big musky at Pymatuning of course. Here is a for-sure Pymatuning musky taken by Rich Sari on January 25 of 2014. He was using a Sonar on 6-pound line. THE fish measured 50 inches and weighed 45 pounds. And he has the mount to prove it!

