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THE Bucket

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OCTOBER 2026

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THE SPEAKER AT OUR SEPTEMBER MEETING

was Fish USA Pro Staff member Nolan Pyle, who gave a great presentation about early season tactics he employs in order to catch early season steelhead. He presented a slide show with many points, ex; Late August to early October is considered "Early Season"

When water is above 65 degrees Steelhead are least active: they have more activity in the morning and evenings. Cool, cloudy days are better, fishing from the beach with a southerly wind and the creeks have been low for a long time or after long periods of rough water. Use spoons, spinners that are not too heavy. Soft plastic minnows, jigs with grubs or minnows also work. Use a long soft rod especially on calm clear days. Try bottom bouncing using egg sacs with foam floats and also power bait.

Fish creeks when the water drops after a rain, even when it's still muddy using big and bright lures or black. Focus on pinch points in the stream flow. When the water drops, fish deep holes or white water pockets. He likes to use a fly rod using small blood dots, streamers and a 6mm bead with trout worm or when using a spinning rod with a plastics small float, tiny split shot and blue egg sac. Use careful catch and release tactics when handling your catch.

FISHING REPORT:

As the boating season comes to a close, there are still reports that show some nice catches of walleye that are being made on the lake when the weather permits it. The cooler temperatures and occasional rainfall are drawing steelhead into the Lake Erie tributary streams and anglers are lining up along the lakeshore and stream banks in an effort to catch them. Take a look at the webcams that are in operation 24/7 on Trout Run and the Walnut Creek Access area to see for yourself at <https://www.fishusa.com/webcams/>.



Anglers fishing the wall on Walnut Creek

10-11-2026 Sun 11:37:49 AM Avonia Beach Fairview PA



View on webcam at Trout Run on 10-11-26

SONS GET RECOGNITION

The SONS of Lake Erie were among other organizations honored for their longevity in service to the fisherman and the fishery of Lake Erie at the PA Steelhead Associations Fall Run Picnic. The SONS reached their 45th anniversary this year while 3-CU Trout Organization and the Northwest Chapter of Trout Unlimited both have served 60 years. The PA Steelhead Association achieved its 30 anniversary. It was a great honor to be included with these other great organizations.



SONS 2026 MEMBERSHIP BUTTON

is a smallmouth bass this year. This is in keeping with featuring a native species fish on the button. You can pick up the 2026 pin at anyone of our events or meetings or you can get one by sending \$3.00 to SONS of Lake Erie, 3411 Peach St Box 233 Erie, PA 16508

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WHERE TO FIND FALL CRAPPIE

from an article by Jason Sealock on Fish USA

When the waters cool in the fall and fish draw out of their deeper summer haunts and move into bays, basins, and creek arms, crappie will move to high spots with cover as well as unique places like docks, shady banks, and an often overlooked prime location — channel swing banks.

White crappie are very cover-oriented but can also be open-water fish in muddier waters, while black crappie are much more structure- and baitfish-oriented. Those two differences will help you identify areas to target. Start at your mid-depth range — say 8–14 feet — fishing cover and high spots like humps, points, flats off creek channels, and then work your way shallower until you find fish.

In the fall, I often start on a channel swing bank or a high spot where the bottom gets shallower in a relatively small area and has some cover on it, like stumps, brush piles, stake beds, or docks. Then I work through the area and let the fish tell me where they want to be.

1. Brush piles often produce the best they will all year in the fall. Anglers can often find a limit of crappie in a single brush pile during this season. Crappie group up the most in the fall as they herd bait and forage before the coldest temps set in, and that puts them in very predictable places. Both casting and vertical jigging excel this time of year on brush piles.

2. Docks are not as often fished for crappie but can hold a ton of black crappie, typically in the fall months. Look for the darkest, shadiest docks near deeper water. Shooting docks is the key technique — leave about 2–3 feet of line out from the end of your rod, grab your jighead by the bend in the hook (keeping your fingers behind the hook point), and pull the jig back to load the rod like a bow and arrow. Keep your line from the tip to your fingers parallel to the water and lower than the opening under the dock. Then simply let go of the jig, followed a split second later by your finger holding the line on your open spinning reel.

3. Structure Changes — the last place I look for crappie in the fall is around structure changes — specifically where a creek channel swings into and away from a bank. These swing banks will often hold a lot of bait in the fall, and it's where I most often find my biggest schools of crappie. Black crappie herd bait much like other gamefish and will often do this on channel swing banks. If these banks have cover, they can be even better, but I often find large schools of crappie just roaming the swing banks looking for pods of bait. Once you find them, it can be fast and furious fishing.

As water temperatures dip below 50 degrees, crappie will move deeper to set up on their winter locations, but there are usually still fish around mid-depth swings and brush well into December in the Midwest and southern states that don't see lakes ice up.

BOATERS NOTE: From November 1 through April 30, boaters are required to wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket while underway or at anchor on boats less than 16 feet in length or on any kayak, canoe, or paddleboard. The requirement applies to all Pennsylvania waters and violators are subject to fines.



In Memoriam

We are very sad to announce the passing of the SONS of Lake Erie former director, Gerry Vollentine, on October 5, 2026. Gerry served on our board of directors for five years.

During that time he was a great asset who brought with him some greatly appreciated skills and ideas. A great fisherman, a great friend and will be sadly missed.

ALTERNATIVE FISH BAITS

Anglers use many different types of fishing baits and lures. Fish live in a variety of habitats and waterways, so fish eat different foods.

Baits are any live or dead food item put on a hook. Lures are made of plastic, metal, wood or feathers and come in all shapes, sizes and colors. Some swivel and spin in the water and some just float.

Many types of baits are available to try when fishing, but worms are the most popular and work well with simple fishing rigs. Crickets, grasshoppers and caterpillars are other baits to try when getting started.

Stores and tackle shops also sell effective artificial baits, or anglers can make baits at home. Try these recipes to catch more fish!

Fish Cereal — Mix cornflakes, water and powdered cheese until doughy. Roll balls and freeze over night.

Fish S'Mores — Smear fire-cooked hotdog chunks with marshmallows and garlic.

Dough Boy — Roll bread bits into balls, and add cinnamon or tuna juice.

Little Smokies — These mini sausages are fish magnets.

Rubber Chicken — Fish love sun-cured, garlic-soaked chicken liver.

Sticky Situation — Chewed and rolled into a ball, teaberry gum catches fish.

The Big Cheese — A cheesy alternative to live bait, cheese balls are irresistible.

Worm Bath — Soaked in vanilla extract, these worms are appetizing.

Spam — Bake small pieces of spam for about 20 minutes

Also consider canned corn kernels, baby marshmallows, pieces of liver, shrimp, macaroni, cheese, peas, hot dogs and chewing gum. We have tried a hot dogs and they work.

ATTENTION SONS MEMBERS

After over 20 years our current printing company is closing operations. We are currently in the process of finding a new printing company. For this reason we may not meet our October 2026 newsletter deadline. Please be patient with us as we do expect some hiccups during the process.

UPCOMING EVENTS: General Meeting Dates

Monday October 26,
Monday November 22,
Monday December 21



HANDICAPPED VETS GO FISHING

On September 23, 2026 Chuck Miller and sons volunteers produced our 4th veterans fishing trip this year with 12 disabled veterans and their care givers from our local Veterans Administration facility and the Pennsylvania Soldiers and Sailors home. We met them at the ferry dock on Presque Isle State Park where they boarded the JoAnn M which is operated by the At the Lake Ministries branch of the Western Pennsylvania

Conference of the United Methodist Church.

The Jo-Ann M is wheelchair friendly with a ramp to board the boat and removable seats to accommodate for any wheelchair size.

The trip was commenced with a brief prayer and blessing prior to boarding the vessel. High winds were producing heavy waves on the Lake so Captain Rob

Wilson who is also a minister, piloted the JoAnn M, a converted former fish tug, onto Presque Isle Bay for a boat tour of Erie's magnificent waterfront followed by a trip into the Presque Isle Marina for calmer water and easier fishing. Only 3 fish were caught including 2 perch and a rock bass nevertheless the vets seemed to have a good time. After the trip all of the veterans and their caregivers were treated to a picnic at the PI cook house

SONS HOLD EMMAUS FISH FRY

On Friday September 11, 2026 seventeen SONS of Lake Erie volunteers set up a truckload of equipment at the Emmaus Soup Kitchen on East 11th St. In Erie. All these logistics were in preparation for our annual fish fry that is prepared for our less fortunate brothers and sisters. For about nine years now we have produced this event at this facility. More than 100 lbs of walleye fillets were trimmed, battered and fried for serving to over two hundred clients of the soup kitchen. In addition to the walleye fillets the dinner included rolls potato salad, coleslaw etc. meals are packed into takeout trays and the clients can either take away for consumption elsewhere or may be enjoyed on the premises.

The walleye for the fish fry were donated by members of our fishing community who participated in three separate fishing tournaments that were held this summer. This fish fry would not take place without their generous support.

Special thanks are also in order for SONS Director Chuck Miller for taking the lead in planning these annual events and for the rest of our volunteers who worked preparing and serving the meals. Many of them generously volunteering every year

Please Note: Out of respect for their privacy we do not include photos of those clients who are served at the soup kitchen.



REMINDER

Yellow Perch caught in Presque Isle Bay or the inland waters of Presque Isle must be at least 7 inches long. The regulation is in effect from December 1 to April 30.



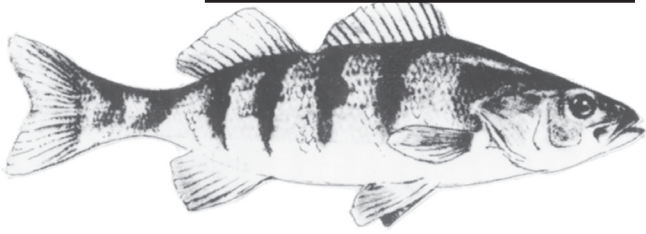
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**"The Bucket" published monthly
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**VOLUME 23 • ISSUE 10
OCTOBER 2026**



"A REPLENISHING SPECIES"

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

MONDAY, OCT 26, 2026 7:00 PM

POLISH FALCONS CLUB

431 E. 3rd Street, Erie

NOTE: The Falcons Club kitchen will be open
in case you come hungry.

PROGRAM: SONS director, Rich Brine will tell the
story of his recent trip to Alaska

LAKE ERIE STURGEON UPDATE

*Article in Cleveland Signal by Devin Nunnari
September 18, 2026 reads as follows:*

It has been nearly a year since the inaugural Sturgeon Fest, where state, local and federal agencies worked with the community to begin the reintroduction of one of Lake Erie's most iconic native species. But how are the little babies doing?

Before the juvenile lake sturgeon were released into the Cuyahoga River last September, many of them received tiny acoustic transmitter implants that communicate with receivers throughout the lake to track their movements. Early data from the U.S. Geological Survey shows that many of the young fish are sticking close to Cleveland harbor.

Female lake sturgeon do not produce eggs until they are between 15 and 30 years of age. This means it may be a generation before we see these juvenile sturgeon return to the Cuyahoga to spawn and create a self-sustaining population, but there have been some early signs that the sturgeon are thriving in Lake Erie.

Last week while conducting routine Lake Erie invasive species monitoring, the Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office found a promising discovery, according to their social media account.

Three lake sturgeon that were released last year. The Facebook post stated how encouraging it was to find that the sturgeon survived their early vulnerable life stage and are faring well in the restored native waters.

"It is really nice to get our hands on these fish and see just how quickly they are growing," Jason Fischer, fisheries biologist with U.S. Fish and Wildlife, wrote. The fingerling sturgeon all measured around 17 inches long, growing roughly 10 inches and doubling in weight in the year since their release.

WOULD YOU RATHER GET YOUR NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL?

If you would like to get your newsletter by email rather than regular mail please send us an email to sonslakeri@aol.com list your name, address and note that you would like to change to the electronic version. In 2026 there were 940 members who have requested the change so far. You can always read the current and past issues of the Bucket at our web site, sonsoflakeerie.org at any time.

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PA Steelhead Association Fishing Survey

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The survey also provides information about lake-run brown trout and salmon that are caught in Lake Erie and in its Pennsylvania tributary streams. You can scan the QR code with your smart phone or go to: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdKLmo_JC_9iTpabsOfHlzSkdXGaEOVWaAFW-Xqume1Lo2kww/viewform or their web page at [https://pasteelhead.wildapricot.org](http://pasteelhead.wildapricot.org)