



A New Year's Perspective in the Northern Tier of Pennsylvania

by Linda Stager

photos by the author

What is on your New Year's list? New adventures? New equipment? New habits?

The New Year can be a time for anglers to making their fishing experiences better.

Why not visit the northern tier of Pennsylvania to check out your favorite fishing spots? Through the spring, summer,



A familiar sight during ice fishing season in the northern tier of Pennsylvania.

and fall months, these fishing spots are usually popular. But, in the winter months, there is a fresh new perspective.

We all get excited for the first day of fishing season, but fishing is also possible during the winter months. Whether it is traditional fishing over open water or ice fishing, the fish are waiting.

Your favorite place to fish will probably be yours and yours only in the winter. Competition thins out as the weather gets colder. However, it will also require you to do things differently. Fish have less energy when the water is cold. And, you will have to deal with your own coldness. But, you will find fish.

The fish will be at the bottom of the stream or lake where you are fishing. And, fish will be schooled up. If you catch a fish in a particular spot, keep fishing it, since there are probably more fish in that location. Fish the deeper, quieter waters. Also, fish the warmer spots and warmer times of day. As much as we all love an early morning on the water, during winter, the best times to fish may be in the middle of the day—11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Trout like cold waters and will be moving around. Perch will bite no matter how cold the weather. Do you want to go big? Look for Channel Catfish and Northern Pike this time of year. These fish may grab your bait.

Bass may be fishable during the warmer parts of the day, especially around noon. This species will be difficult to catch but will provide a challenge.

And, of course, as soon as the weather gets colder and the small lakes freeze, the exhilaration of a good morning of ice fishing awaits. The smaller lakes of Tioga County—Beechwood Lake, Hamilton Lake, Nessmuk Lake, and Hills Creek Lake—draw anglers from all over Pennsylvania. These lakes freeze early and are reliable ice fishing locations.

Beechwood Lake, Tioga County, hosts an ice fishing tournament every February, sponsored by the CV Anglers Club. This active club hosts fishing derbies for kids and maintains a trout nursery in addition to sponsoring the ice fishing event. Last year, the lunger prize for largest “other” fish at the tournament was a 6.68-pound bass.

To find out when lakes are freezing, visit Wellsboro’s tackle shop just north of town. They are experts on ice fishing and keep a close watch on all the local lakes. You can check out the latest information about the area right here.

Or, visit Pine Creek. Pine Creek is the major waterway through Tioga County. There are trophy trout in Pine Creek. Visit one of the special regulation areas on Pine Creek and try a hand at cold weather fishing. If you would rather stay inside, drive to Slate Run and check out the tackle shop. The tackle shop specializes in fly fishing and knows Pine Creek better than most, and you can get a start on spring fishing plans.

For those who would rather stay off the water, visit Wellsboro, Tioga County, for good food and entertainment. Wellsboro is known for its gaslight-lined boulevard along historic Main Street. Visit during a quiet time and soak in the ambiance. There is nothing like a



A rare look at Pine Creek, Tioga County, from Colton Point. The road is accessible by snowmobile during the winter.

winter stroll on Main Street at dusk. Add in a snowfall and it becomes magical.

For those who want a little more activity, Wellsboro excels at winter festivals. The big holiday celebrations are over, but Wellsboro’s winter festival is usually scheduled annually for the weekend closest to Valentine’s Day. If the celebration is a go this year, plan for sales, live entertainment, and live ice sculpting on Main Street. By the end of Saturday, the historic district will be transformed into a walking ice sculpture garden. There is good fun and entertainment at most of the downtown businesses that weekend, and the sculptures are especially beautiful at night. The celebration will delight the non-anglers in the family.

All in all, there is something for everyone in Tioga County, even in the winter. Visit your favorite fishing spot, plan for spring fishing, do a little fishing, and have some fun. The fish are waiting. ☐



Darling Run on Pine Creek, Tioga County.