



Pymatuning Reservoir— **WARMWATER MECCA** *by Marilyn Black*

Pymatuning Reservoir is a warmwater fishing mecca and the largest inland lake in both Pennsylvania and Ohio. Situated on the headwaters of the Shenango River, Crawford County, Pennsylvania, and Ashtabula County, Ohio, Pymatuning Reservoir has over 16,000 acres of water surface surrounded by 106 miles of shoreline and two state parks both called Pymatuning State Park. Annually, Pennsylvania's Pymatuning State Park has over 3 million visitors, making it one of the most popular state parks in the Commonwealth. A 2-mile long causeway bridge runs east-west across the middle of the lake, connecting Espyville, Pennsylvania, with Andover, Ohio.

The Pymatuning Wetlands still carry the name given by the Leni Lenape nation to the area's extensive swamps, white pine forests and low hills. It translates as "Dwelling place of the crooked-mouthed man," although to this day one can debate whether this was a reference to a disfigured individual or a deceitful person.

Intended to control downstream flooding, the construction of Pymatuning Reservoir and clearing of the soon-to-be-impounded land employed 7,000 workers during the years 1931 through 1934. This \$3.7 million initiative culminated in the dedication of the dam by Governor Gifford Pinchot, who opened his remarks with "Every human accomplishment has its beginning in a dream." The pieced stone and concrete Gate House that controls the below-water-level gates and sluices through the 2,500 foot long earthen dam was rehabilitated in 2015 through 2017. Today a replica clay tile

roof and the restored original bronze weathervane featuring geese in flight top what has become the landmark symbol for Pymatuning State Park.

But, it is the extensive lowland reservoir formed by the dam, that attracts boaters, anglers and other guests. The maximum motor horsepower allowed on Pymatuning Reservoir is 20 horsepower, making it well-suited to a blend of pontoons, sailboats, fishing boats, kayaks, canoes and paddleboards. Average water depth is about 15 feet, with 30 feet as the maximum depth over the bed of the Shenango River. Ohio and Pennsylvania honor fishing licenses of either state for boaters. However, shore-based anglers must have the license for the state where they stand while fishing.

Public access is convenient thanks to multiple boat ramps along the banks of Pymatuning Reservoir and three full-service marinas including boat rentals, mooring, as well as bait and tackle shops. Families also enjoy the four beaches, numerous pavilions, three public campgrounds and hiking trails. Unusual attractions include an 18-hole disc golf course in Pymatuning State Park's Jamestown Day Use Area, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission's (PFBC's) Linesville Fish Hatchery along the no-fishing-allowed Pymatuning Sanctuary, and the famous Linesville Spillway, where a large concrete lip separates the higher water level of the Pymatuning Sanctuary from the main body of the lake. Since 1934, guests have pitched bread to the eager assembled hordes of carp and waterfowl, making this spot known as "where the ducks walk on the fish's backs."

photo-Dani Black



Anglers on the fishing pier at Espyville, Crawford County.

photo-Darl Black



photo-Marilyn Black

Karen and her daughter, Amy, caught these Bluegills near the Jamestown Campground in Pymatuning State Park, Crawford County.

PFBC Fisheries Biologist Tim Wilson monitors the diverse fish species found in this complex system. He explains that due to three consecutive relatively mild winters, the forage base has boomed. Gizzard Shad, Alewives, Spottail Shiners, juvenile Bluegills and juvenile Yellow Perch are a natural food source for warmwater gamefish. Several year-classes of Muskellunge have experienced great survival rates, making Muskellunge in the 30- to 42-inch range abundant. Also, Walleyes are increasing as evidenced by results of PFBC spring-time trap netting conducted the past four years. Fish populations are holding steady for perch, Bluegills, Channel Catfish, Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass. Carp numbers dropped due to a carp-specific illness in 2017 called koi herpes virus.

With “Panfish Enhancement Special Regulations” instituted lake-wide in 2017, Wilson indicated it’s too soon to see population effects of the new daily creel limit of 20 crappies with a minimum size of 9 inches. Crappies peaked in 2012 and have been on a downswing.

Fish habitat improvement cribs and other devices are added annually, through collaborative efforts of Ohio Division of Wildlife, PFBC and the Pymatuning Lake Association. A detailed map showing GPS coordinates and habitat project types is found on www.fishandboat.com. 📄

Planning Your Pymatuning Calendar

January through February

- Eagle watching near dam
- Sledding on slopes of Pymatuning Reservoir
- Ice fishing from marina docks or directly on the ice
- Winter Fun Days

March through April

- Walleye anglers flock here due to year-round season
- Open House at Linesville State Fish Hatchery
- Muskellunge on the prowl

May through June

- Crappies galore
- Many bass tournaments due to year-round season
- Fish habitat cribs constructed and positioned
- Panfish very active

July through August

- Channel Catfish active
- Pymatuning Lake Festival based at Ohio Causeway Beach near Andover
- Kids Free Fishing Derby based at Espyville Boat Launch
- Highest water temperatures

September through October

- Good Muskellunge catches
- Bass and crappie fishing good
- Fall Walleye fishing peaks
- Must remove moored boats from marinas

November through December

- Marina docks now available to anglers
- Hunting permitted at Tuttle Point Campground

Pennsylvania ANGLER & BOATER



Get the complete story and read what you've been missing!



Do you like what you're reading? Do you find *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* online articles a valuable resource? If so, why not become a regular subscriber to *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater* and receive the entire magazine delivered to your doorstep. With each printed issue, we place only a small portion of our feature articles on our website. If you fish or boat in Pennsylvania, you shouldn't miss a single issue, or even a single article! It's been the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission's (PFBC's) premier, award-winning magazine since 1931.

Print out this page and mail the form below with your payment to begin your subscription. Or you can subscribe online through PFBC's Outdoor Shop. **CLICK HERE!**

6 Issues per year!

Subscribe with this form today or online at www.pa.wildlifelicense.com.

SUBSCRIBE TO *Pennsylvania Angler & Boater*

Payment must accompany orders. Use your credit card, check or money order made payable to the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission. Return this form with payment to: **PA&B Circulation, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.** Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone (include area code) _____

E-mail (optional) _____

Account # if renewing or extending _____

One year (6 issues) **\$20** Three years (18 issues) **\$48**

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$

Credit Card Purchase: VISA Mastercard Discover

Credit Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Phone _____ Email (optional) _____

Since 1931, Pennsylvania's official fishing and boating magazine.