

Dedicated to the Memory of

Commissioner Enoch S. "Inky" Moore

PLAY



Pennsylvania • League • of • Angling • Youth

by Amidea Daniel and Chad Foster

The Lure of Pennsylvania's Silver Shadows

Labeled as "silver shadows," "chromers" or "silver bullets," Pennsylvania's steelhead are some of the most respected and hard-to-find fish you will ever chase. Known for their strength, acrobatics and survival, these fish provide an experience like no other. Steelhead fishing is an experience all anglers should place on their list of things to do.



During October through April, about 100,000 anglers journey far and wide to fish Lake Erie's tributary streams for steelhead. Anglers travel to these cold waters to get the feel of the season's "first strike." This hooks many for life and sends reels screaming, hearts racing and trout dancing across the water, luring anglers time and time again.

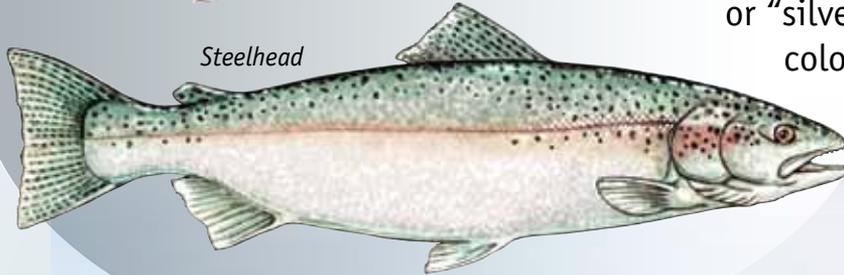
This issue shares information on Pennsylvania's steelhead such as appropriate stream manners, tackle and techniques and where to fish for a chance at a 30-inch "silver bullet."

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Profiling Erie's "Silver Bullet"



Rainbow Trout

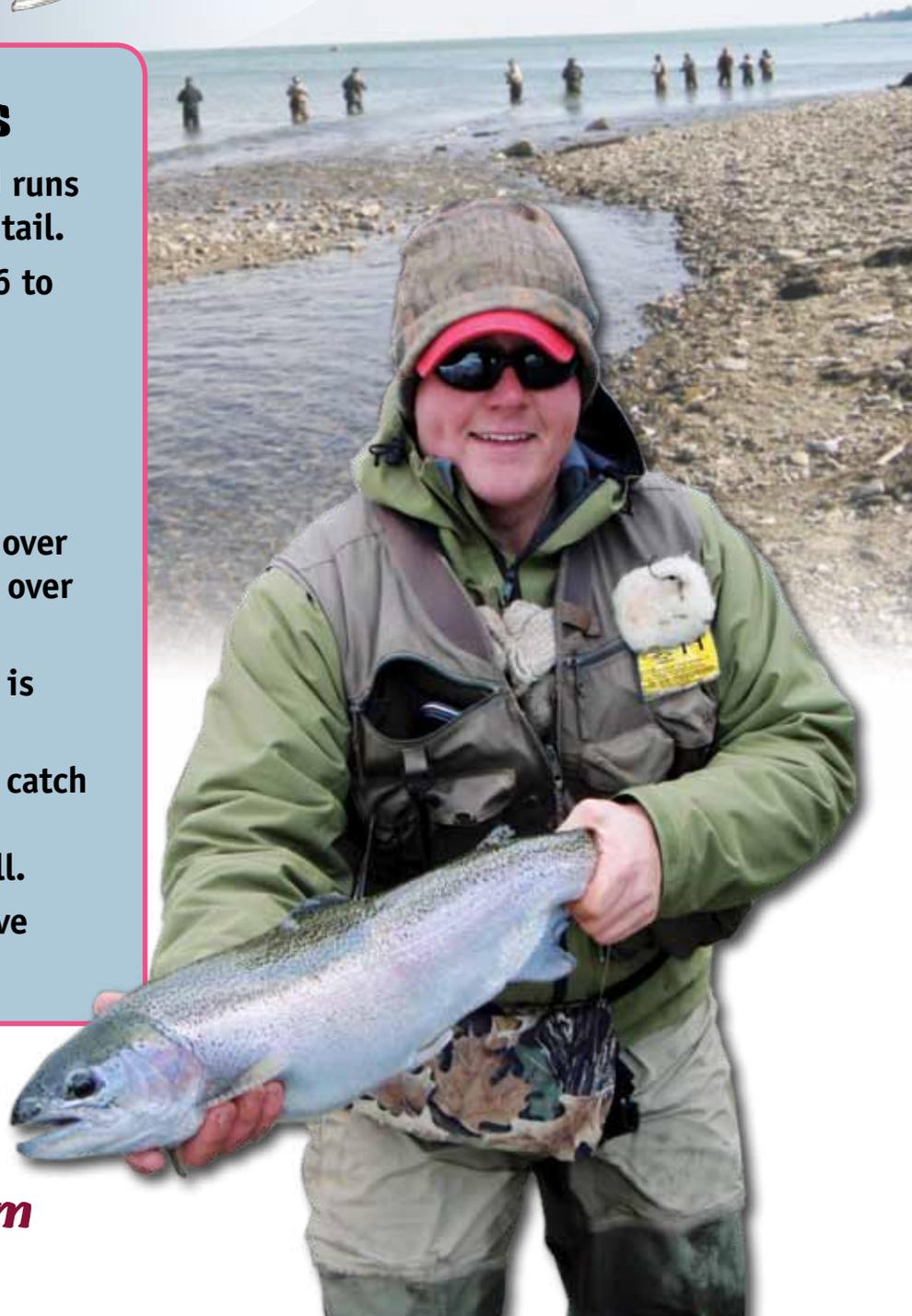


Steelhead

Steelhead are rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). They look similar to rainbow trout, but they are larger, live longer and are more silver in color. They are nicknamed "chromers" or "silver bullets" because of their color. Steelhead travel from the depths of Lake Erie to spawn in nearby tributary streams.

Steelhead Facts

- ✓ A faint pink or red band runs from their gills to their tail.
- ✓ Average adult weight is 6 to 11 pounds.
- ✓ Average adult length is 24 inches long.
- ✓ Life span is 8 years.
- ✓ Trophy steelhead weigh over 10 pounds and measure over 30 inches long.
- ✓ The current state record is 20 pounds.
- ✓ The best opportunity to catch a steelhead is when the stream waters rise or fall.
- ✓ Steelhead are more active near dawn and dusk.



Stream Manners

Remember the **SMART** angler philosophy:

Safety first.

Manners are important.

Appreciate clean water.

Release some of your catch.

Teach others to be SMART anglers.



STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!



(Above) Round Goby



(Left) Zebra Mussels

Stop aquatic hitchhikers such as round gobies and zebra mussels from entering all waterways.

- Check your equipment for mud and aquatic animals and plants.
- Drain coolers and bait buckets used to hold fish and bait. Properly discard any leftover bait.
- Clean mud from your boots and equipment.
- Dry your equipment and clothing until its dry to the touch. Then, allow it to dry for two more days.

Safety

- Never fish alone. Always let someone else know where you plan to fish.
- Watch water levels, because they can rise quickly.
- When wading, use boots with metal cleats or studs and a wading staff.

Be Respectful of

- Private property—Ask for permission, and stay in the stream.
- Fishing areas—Be courteous of other anglers on the stream.



Practice "Leave No Trace"

- "Pack out what you pack in."
- If you see trash along the stream, pick it up.
- Bring a litterbag.

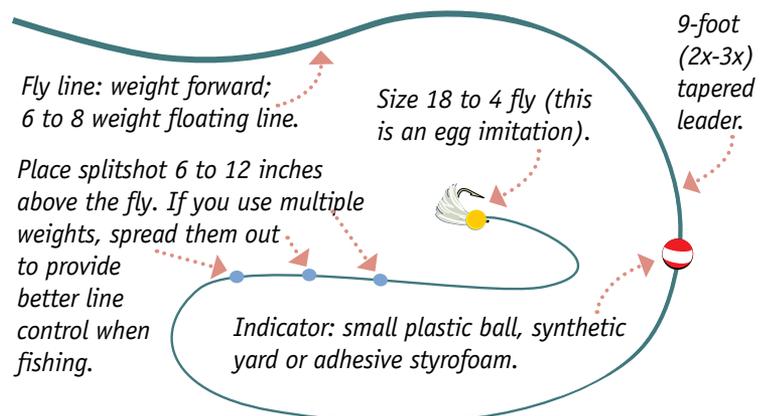
Equipment Used to Target Steelhead

Steelhead are large, aggressive fish. You need fishing gear and techniques that can endure their fight. Water conditions determine the types of equipment, bait and flies used for steelhead fishing.



Woolly Buggers, egg imitations, Bunny Leeches, stoneflies and wet flies can make a colorful and lively tackle box.

	Bait Fishing	Fly Fishing
Rod	8 foot or longer; medium-light action noodle rod. Longer rods allow lighter line to be used	9 foot or longer; 6- to 8-weight rod
Reel	Large reel with a lot of line capacity and a good sealed drag system	Large reel with a lot of line capacity and a good sealed drag system
Line	4- to 8-pound fluorocarbon line	Weight Forward Fly Line (6 to 8 weight); 9 foot, 2 to 3x tapered leader; 100 yards of backing
Hooks	Sizes 18 up to 4 (smaller number=larger hook)	Sizes 18 up to 4
Weights	Select splitshots that are small, black or dull in color	Select splitshots that are small, black or dull in color
Bait, lures and flies	Minnows, meal worms, red worms, egg sacs, Sucker Spawn, paste baits, spoons and spinners	Woolly Buggers, egg imitations, Bunny Leeches, stoneflies and wet flies





Catching Lake Erie Steelhead

Steelhead group together, so fishing waters with a mix of good cover and water depth is an effective fishing technique. Overhead cover is also important. Deep water, riffles, rocks or timber are ideal holding locations to fish.



Bait Fishing

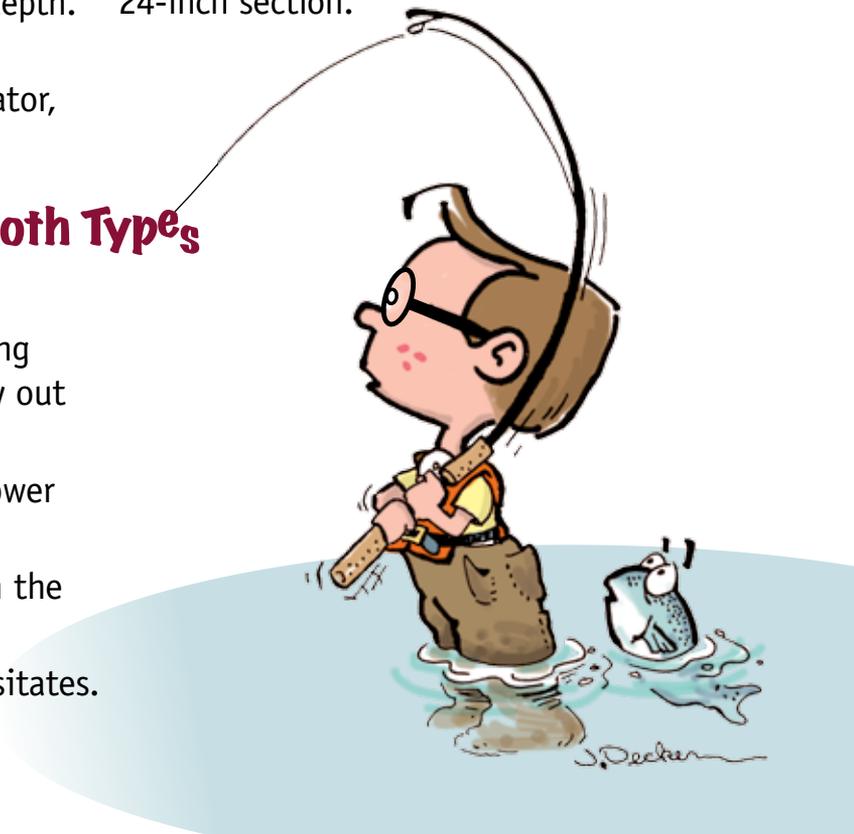
- Place your bait of choice onto the hook.
- Choose your splitshot based on water conditions and type of bait.
- Slow-moving water requires less weight than fast-moving water or heavier baits.
- Place the weight about 6 to 12 inches above your bait.
- Attach the hook to the line.

Fly Fishing with Egg Patterns

- Tie the hook with the egg pattern to the end of your leader.
- Place the indicator on your leader a few inches or two feet down from your fly line. Placement depends on water speed and depth.
- Choose a splitshot size based on water conditions, type of fly and size of indicator, if you do not have a weighted nymph.
- Place the weight about 6 to 12 inches above the fly.
- Do not place the weight all in one location. Spread them out within a 24-inch section.

Fishing Techniques Used for Both Types of Fishing

- Cast the bait or fly upstream into holding water. Cast close at first. Work your way out to the middle of the stream.
- Lead the line with your rod tip at or slower than water current.
- Continue to lead the bait or fly through the drift when the line passes you.
- Set the hook if the bait or indicator hesitates.



Fighting and Releasing Steelhead

Most large fish are lost due to poorly tied knots, slack line, weak hooks or incorrect rod handling.

- Set your drag to handle steelhead and make sure you have strong knots.
- After setting the hook, maintain a tight line between your rod hand and the steelhead.
 1. Reel in slack line as the steelhead swims toward you.
 2. Allow the steelhead to take line off the reel when it “runs.”
 3. Don’t grab the line with your fingers.



- Angle your rod to the side and at waist height, using the butt end (back section) of the rod to play the fish. The rod should bend at the butt end, not at the tip.
- Keep your rod angled low and apply pressure in the opposite direction that the fish is swimming.
- Net your trophy. Bring the tip of the fish’s head out of the water and slide the net under its body. Have a friend help net your fish.



Releasing Your Catch

- Use a net to land your fish and pliers to remove the hook.
- Wet hands before handling.
- Keep the trout in the water when removing the hook and taking photos.
- Allow the fish to revive in the water before releasing it.

"Steelhead Alley" Word Search

K N U R T U O R T V P Z C K T
 E E T S Z C W H D P S R E W D
 E G E A G C O S P H O E E A I
 R F G R K W L C N T R N N L E
 C U V Z C T B A M C T H A N A
 T E I M B E B B N Y E F Q U H
 U K I A V G L O M L H J Y T L
 A L B R R H O I K U M J O C O
 E W J L E C L C M F Z A R R D
 N S O D C E R W N R I G L E J
 N L J A C E K B Q J U O A E R
 O B R R E K S A C I I O G K X
 C A E K A V J F L C W K F V F
 Z E C A S C A D E C R E E K F
 K Y A B E L S I E U Q S E R P

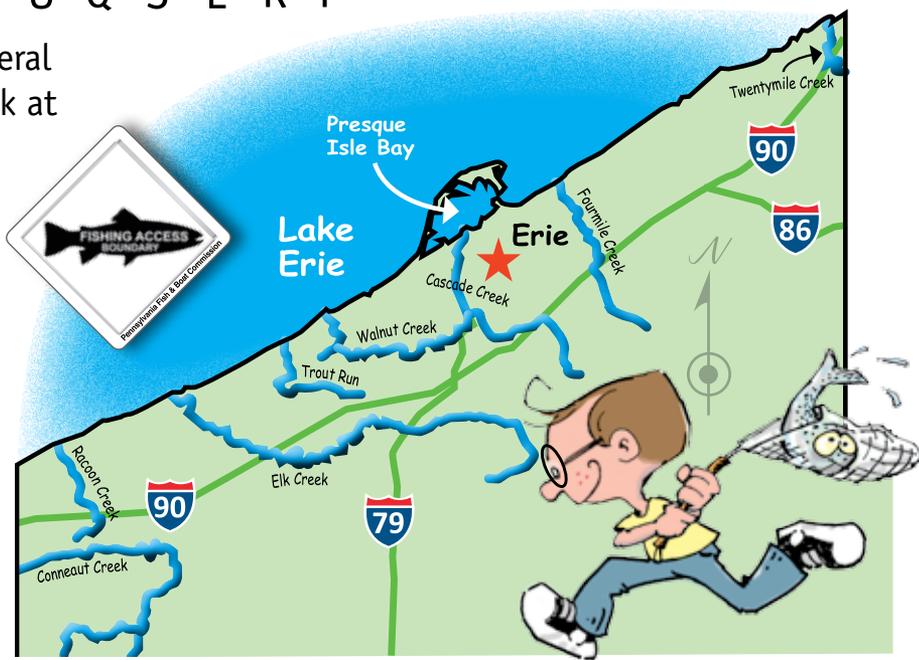
There are ten streams located in this word search. Find these streams:

- Cascade Creek**
- Presque Isle Bay**
- Conneaut Creek**
- Raccoon Creek**
- Elk Creek**
- Trout Run**
- Fourmile Creek**
- Twentymile Creek**
- Lake Erie**
- Walnut Creek**

(Hint: Some words may appear backwards or in a diagonal direction.)

"Steelhead Alley" consists of several streams. Pick one, and try your luck at catching a steelhead.

For more information on steelhead public fishing areas and regulations, visit the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission's website at www.fishandboat.com/steelhead.htm.



SEE BELOW FOR ANSWERS TO "STEELHEAD ALLEY" WORD SEARCH

P R E S D N E I S T E B A Y K
 F K E E R C E D V C S V C E Z
 F V K M C L F V A V K E V C
 X K G O I C V A S K R E R O
 R E O A U J Q B K E C V T N
 J E L G I R N W R E C E O S N
 D R A R Z F W C T C E T J W E
 O C O C W U K I O H R R B T V
 L T Y C H T W O T G V A I K U
 H U D F E Y N B B E B W I E T
 V N A H T C W A B T C Z A U C
 E T N N R T N C T M K R G F R
 I V E E O H P S O C G A E G E
 D M E R S P D H M C Z S T E E
 T K C Z P V T R O U T R U N K

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