



Elk Creek

Elk Creek is the largest and most popular of the Erie County tributary streams. It enters Lake Erie about one-half mile west of State Route 18 in Girard Township. Elk starts south of the Town of McKean. It flows under Interstate 79 at the McKean exit (Exit 39), under West Road (State Road 3020) in the Village of Sterrettania, under State Route 98 at Folly's End Campground south of the Town of Fairview, under a scenic covered bridge on Gudgeonville Road (Township Route 400), then northwest through a mostly wooded area passing under Interstate 90, then north under U.S. Route 20 in Girard and under U.S. Route 5 in Lake City and on to Lake Erie.

Elk is stocked with steelhead and brown trout. It is an stocked trout water and is heavily fished early in the regular trout season. During the summer and fall, the lower reaches of Elk hold bass, panfish and catfish. Like the other creeks in the watershed, by June most parts of the creek are low and too warm for trout, and the fishing for steelhead and stocked brown trout is over.

During early fall, steelhead may not get beyond the Route 5 bridge. The fish move upstream as the season wears on. By winter, steelhead can usually be found all the way upstream to the McKean exit of Interstate 79.

There is a sizable parking and picnic area at the mouth of Elk. There are outhouses, covered picnic facilities and paved parking lots. There is a boat launch at the access area. Although small boats can be launched from this site, boats headed for the deep waters of Lake Erie may find themselves stuck on a sandbar at the mouth of this creek. The mouth access area can be reached from the road located part-way up the hill on Route 5 west of Route 18. An unofficial-looking sign on Route 5 stating "Elk Creek Access Area" marks the spot.

The PFBC maintains a parking lot on property it acquired on the east side of Elk Creek just south of the mouth. Turn off Route 5 at the Elk Creek Sport Store and drive north toward the Lake to the bottom of the hill. The parking lot will be on your left. This provides access to the east side of the lower reaches of Elk Creek.

The area from the parking lot to the lake is a wide and slow-moving estuary. There is some fishing for a short distance along the west bank below the parking lot before the shale cliff rises. If you enter from the main parking lot, to fish below this area you must either wade across to the other side of the creek (it can be deep, hip boots probably won't do it), or you must take a rough path up along the west side of the creek and down to the mouth. The path entrance is at the north end of the lowest parking lot. There is a sizable fishable area at the mouth (as well as a nice beach). This is almost always very slow moving. Some anglers drift or fly fish in this area, while others still fish.



In the early fall, when there has been little rain and the creeks are low and clear, the mouth of Elk is very popular for steelhead. Because it is deep and slow, it may be one of the few places holding steelhead.

During these times the fishing pressure in this area can be very heavy. This area is also popular for

catfish. The catfish run into the creek when the forsythia bloom in the spring. Most of the fishing for catfish is done at night. Suckers also run up Elk Creek in the spring.

Just south of the parking lots at the access area Elk begins to flow more rapidly. The area from the parking lots south to the Route 5 bridge can hold steelhead early in the season. It can also experience significant fishing pressure. It can be difficult to wade south past the tubes below Route 5.

There are a number of access areas from Route 5 south to Girard. Almost all of the parking and access upstream from the Elk Creek Access Area is on private lands. Parking and fishing is provided only by owner permission, which can be withdrawn at any time. Please respect their property. In 2001 parking along Route 5 was prohibited and it remains that way now. A private, paid lot is sometimes in operation on the north side of Route 5 just west of the stream (but you can walk to there by going into the access area and parking in the first, upper lot). Sometimes you can drive into the campground off Route 5 at the bottom of the hill, but most times this too is posted.

Upstream the creek runs through property owned by Fairview Evergreen Nurseries. Although this is private land, the Nurseries do not post it and currently permit angler access. There is a place to park next to the creek just south of the Conrail tubes beneath Route 5. There is also access off North Creek Road (Township Road 543) both north and south of the railroad tracks. You will see rough roads on the west side of the road both north and south of the narrow railroad underpass. North Creek Road intersects Route 5 part way up the hill past (or west of) the creek. There is good fishing on both sides of the railroad bridge. All parking and access in this area is through the courtesy of Fairview Evergreen Nurseries.

A popular access point is at the steel bridge on Elk Park Road (Township Road 544). The fishing can be good both upstream and downstream from this bridge. Further upstream the creek can be accessed from Girard Park. There is a small and not-too-well marked access road off Lake Street in southern Girard. This access road splits and goes to both a park (this road is sometimes blocked-off), and a sewage treatment plant. You can park at the either location and access the creek.

Another very popular spot is the "American Legion Hole." This is a good but slow-moving and heavily fished hole. It is accessed by taking a spur road which angles off to the south from Route 20 just west of Girard as you start down the hill toward Elk Creek. There are signs on Route 20 for several industries (including "Reddog Industries") that are located on this small road. Follow the road to the left, then past the industries to its end. The American Legion park is on the right, and the road continues straight down into a dirt parking lot along the creek. A short path leads downstream to this popular hole.



The area upstream from the American Legion hole is flat and shallow for a considerable distance. There is good fishing upstream under a set of railroad tracks, but it is a long hike up the creek from the American Legion hole parking lot.

There is good fishing later in the season upstream from the Gudgeonville covered bridge, but access to some parts of the creek is difficult. The area on all sides of the covered bridge on Gudgeonville Road (Township Road 400) is posted. Prior to 1999, the creek from Interstate 90 and south could be accessed from Beckman Road (Township Road 547) just south of where it passes over Interstate 90. You could park on Beckman Road and walk a long and sometimes steep trail down to the creek. Carrying fish home from this location is not recommended. If you are willing to walk a considerable distance just to get to the creek, you will find a beautiful area both upstream and downstream. However, in 1999 the area along Beckman Road was also posted.

The next popular access point upstream is at Folly's End Campground off Route 98 south of the Town of Fairview. This is about a mile south of the intersection of Route 98 and Interstate 90 (Exit 4 - Fairview). There is a tackle shop at the campground, which includes fly gear. There is also a sizable pool right at the campground that is popular. The fishing can be good both upstream and downstream from Folly's End.

Upstream from Folly's End is the "Streuchen Flats" area. There is a parking lot and access area here. To reach this location, travel east on State Route 832 (Sterrettania Road) east of Route 98. Turn south on the dead end road known as Platz Road (Township Road 428), and follow it to its end. This road is not maintained in the winter. There is good fishing both upstream and down.



There are several small access points along Sterrettania Road to the village of Sterrettania, then south along West Road toward Interstate 79.

The last popular fishing area is at the big pool just south of the intersection of Interstate 79 and West Road at the McKean exit of I-79. This pool is located behind a heavy truck repair shop and just south of the on-bound ramp to Interstate 79 north. This is the furthest point upstream that the Fish and Boat Commission stocks brown trout, and it is a very popular hole on opening day. The PFBC also occasionally places spawned-out steelhead in this pool.

Anglers are advised that there are a number of posted areas in the upper stretches of Elk Creek.