

## This Month With A Susquehanna River Guide Lance Dunham

For at least the first three weeks of August we had on and off rains that gave us slightly higher river levels which was nice but much dirtier water conditions. The water temps stayed in the low 70's which is rare for this time of year. We had slightly faster water with a dark to a muddy stain color. I noticed the local boat population had also decreased because of this. Sure it may be just a little more difficult to catch fish, but we were still catching 50 to 80 fish per day and the walleyes have perked up also because of the water cooling down somewhat. Basically, in dark dirty water you just have to help the fish find your lure. You can do this several ways, as in the case of jigs, increase the profile, go darker in color and present them slower. Use your trolling motor to slow down your drift. In spinner baits go up a blade size. With my LD Spinner Baits I usually use a #3 gold Colorado blade which is big already for that size of a spinner. We've been experimenting by replacing the blade with a #4 gold blade. We now call these LD Thumpers because of the tremendous vibration it gives off. They work well in dirty water because you can work them very slow along the river bottom and the bass and walleyes love them and the northern pike and muskie rip them up. Upsize your crank baits also such as the Rebel Crayfish which has great vibration and a bb sound chamber to help the fish find the lure.

This is usually the last of the hot summer months for river recreation. You never know what people will come up with for some fun on the river. One day I had a charter in a more remote area of the river and I looked up to see several home made rafts floating along. They were all about six or seven feet square, made out of wood with foam underneath to keep them buoyant, all equipped with the latest in good old boy rafting fun and powered only with a couple of paddles and the water current. They all seemed to have the lawn chairs on them, several coolers for food and the all important beverages. I saw one that was cooking on a small grill and of course the optional table and umbrella. How they kept everything on board when they went down the faster water while bouncing off the rocks I'll never know. The only troubling thing they did was one of them left their wood raft frame for trash at the next public access when they left. Not very cool guys. I saw the biggest raft I've ever seen the other day. It looked like a replica of a 1800's freight raft. It was about 10ft wide by at least 20ft long filled with provisions for a long journey and very well constructed. That had to be interesting navigating through the narrow August water channels.

In the guiding profession it's often about the numbers that attract clients, like mostly how many fish on average do you catch per day in a particular month, or how many years of full time guiding experience do you have, or the all important how many repeat customers do you have. Well I had a gent on board for an evening charter not too long ago that wanted to know something I hadn't thought of before. He wanted to know approximately how many casts, I've personally made with my rods in the past 28 years that I've been guiding. I told him that I'd have to get back to him on that because I didn't have enough fingers and toes to give him an answer right there but I'd put it in my next column for him. So here it is. I average between 400 to 500 casts per day, depending on the client, on an average 8 hr charter. I charter 6 to 7 days a week for 8 months a year, for 28 years. Looks like I've thrown over 2 million casts just in my guiding career. Whew! All the sudden I feel a bit tired. Honey, can you take out the trash tonight?

This has been the month for kids fishing from my boat. There were many dads and granddads bringing their children and grandchildren fishing and they caught many quality fish while with me. These people are to be commended for spending quality time with their children in the outdoors. The notion that you have to give a kid a bobber and live bait to catch fish out of the river is way off base. Once they hit 7 or 8 years old they have plenty of co-ordination to use a push button reel or even a spinning reel. You can give them a little head start with the rod and reel by playing casting games with them in your back yard. Set a target bucket out a little ways and let them practice throwing a weighted lure with no hooks at it. Don't let them fool you, these kids are smart! They are like little sponges soaking up the information they are presented with. If you keep their interest up and make it fun, they will remember what you teach them. A case in point, I was fishing with a dad and two young sons this month and to promote catch and release fishing with the smallmouth bass, every time someone would catch a bass, I would comment on approximately how old it was based on it's length. Such as a 8" bass was about 3yrs old, or a 11" bass was about 4 years old or when we would get a 16" smallie, it was about 7yrs old. It wasn't long before the kids were doing the same thing. They would have a bass on the line and I would ask what do you have there. They would say "Oh about a 3yr old smallie" or whatever it would be. These kids were having fun and they listen to what you have to say, so take my advise and don't say the wrong things, start them out right.

The wildlife on the river is abundant as usual with all the food they get from the water. The mink population must be increasing, we saw them almost on a daily basis sometimes two at a time going into the water and

around the rocks looking for crayfish. One foggy morning there were two young grey fox along the river bank. One was up on an old dead tree which had fallen over and the other was on the shore bank. They were just sitting there watching six Canada geese not twenty foot away on the water in front of them no doubt wondering how to catch one and what to do when they did. The geese were not bothered by their audience and made no attempt to move away. The month of August always brings in a few Great Egrets. These birds look similar to the Great Blue Herons only pure white, a truly beautiful bird. There are about six of them staying in the area now which gives the river almost a soothing Southern effect. We got to watch a mature bald eagle fishing the other day not 50 yards from the boat. He would swoop down out of the sky and pluck a fish out of the river. It took him three attempts before he was successful but he did it. I had a close encounter with a young bald eagle the other day. There was a very dense fog bank along the river as the Green Weenie and I were towing the boat to the access. On one of the guide rails there was a young bald eagle perched and as I drove by he took off in front of the truck! I hit the breaks and he missed me by a good 5ft but all I could see were those huge wings in the windshield. I could see the headlines now, "Local Fishing Guide Runs Over National Symbol", yep wouldn't that be just great for business. Well that's all I have for now, boat safely and I'll see you on the river. For further reports and daily information visit my web site at [www.ldguideservice.com](http://www.ldguideservice.com) .

Good Fishing

Lance