

This Month With A Susquehanna River Guide Lance Dunham

The first two weeks of June were what we call “Post Spawn” meaning the big female smallmouth bass are done spawning so they go to deep water, spread out in location, and essentially say “Leave me alone, I’m resting”. This makes catching big bass the first two weeks of June a bit more difficult to say the least. Oh we still will catch 40 to 70 fish a day, but mostly smaller fish. The Northern Pike and Muskie bite have slowed down due to the water temperature going up to the high 60’s to high 70’s. The walleye have also slowed down but still catchable.

I’m fortunate enough to do a few TV shows a season and of course, I’m not that crazy to have a show done when the fishing is tough, or you would think so. I schedule them when the fishing is easier and the fish bigger per day on average so we can have a good show. I scheduled The “All Outdoors with Alan Probst” show for early spring to go after the big pre spawn smallmouth but things happen. Alan had an emergency that day and had to reschedule. However we had already planned to go fishing without the camera and take his dad, Charlie, fishing the first week of June. Charlie really likes to fish for trout, and I wanted to show him that smallmouth bass fight better than his stream brookies, browns, and rainbows. OK, so that’s just my opinion, right? Being that the bass were in post spawn I knew that this show would be the toughest one I’ve ever done and I told this to Alan. He laughed and asked how I did the day before. I told him I had taken a man and his 13yr old son out and we caught 51 fish and the youngster caught a monster 19” smallmouth which earned him a catch and release Angling Award from the Pa. Fish and Boat Commission. I still had the photo on my camera which I showed him. He smiled and said let’s just do the show and see what happens. The plan was that Charlie and I would do the fishing and Alan would run the camera. We started out in an easy section without many rocks so Charlie could get used to the river fishing since this was his first time out for smallies on the North Branch. Soon I caught a small bass and then a 18” walleye which we got on film and Charlie got a couple of hits, I thought the day might work out ok. I caught another 17” walleye an hour later and many too small bass for TV in my unprofessional opinion, but I’m my harshest critic and that’s fishing. The biggest bass we caught that day was 16” which is ok for the river and we ended up with 47 fish caught and released for the day which was good for post spawn conditions. Charlie is a lot of fun to fish with, he caught some nice bass that day and had a good time but I couldn’t get him to say on camera that this smallie fishing was better than his beloved

trout, at least not on his first time out. Alan and his dad are due back to film another show in October. Odds are we will catch twice as many fish that time of year and we'll see what I can get Charlie to say then on film about smallie fishing. Alan got some great footage of the area, along with some wildlife. We stopped at one place and filmed two eaglets in their nest. These young eagles will be flying very soon. They would hop up on the edge of their huge nest and test their long wings by flapping them in the air. These "babies" are about as big as their parents and are quite a sight to see. You can check out Alan's show Sunday mornings at 9:30AM on the FSN channel or on the Sportsman Channel. You can also see clips of my shows with Alan on his web site at www.alanprobst.com just click on TV.

The lures working this month are the jig with either a tube or stick worm such as the Alluring Baits Trick Stick mostly in 3" size on them. Crank baits like the Reble Crawfish. Jerk Baits like the Rapala X-Rap, and my LD Spinner Baits. The LD Spinner Bait is nothing more than a 1/4oz grub spinner with a #3 gold Colorado blade tipped with a stick worm. The bass and walleye seem to love them and they are easy to use just cast them out and reel back in. I like to use them in shallow water up to 3ft deep over a rocky bottom. The vibration of that gold blade really helps in the dark stained water commonly found in June and it stays off the bottom where the rock moss is that gets tangled in your lures this time of year. The locals call this moss, "snot grass" because of it's slimy, gooey texture.

You know, timing can be everything in fishing, from the time you park your vehicle in the morning until the time you leave, your timing in between may make or break your day, a couple of examples surfaced this month. I was fishing with a long time client who always likes to park his car under the trees for shade while out on the boat. One day he thought he'd like to leave a couple of hours early so we went in at 2:00PM instead at the regular time of 4:00PM. I had an evening charter so I waited in my truck in the parking lot. At 2:30PM the wind came up to about 25mph and I heard a loud cracking noise and looked over to see a huge tree limb about 20" in diameter fall right where his car was sitting just a short time ago. That huge limb would have done a lot of damage to his car if it had still been there. His timing was good that day. Then a couple of weeks later we were fishing and as we often do we rig up two fishing rods or more for each angler so we can have different lures ready for certain situations at a moments notice. At one point my client set his rod down and the lure on the rod dangled over the boat about a foot down in the water. While he was getting ready to cast with his other rod, a huge fish grabbed the dangling lure and took off down river. The rod shot out of the boat and my client made a dive for it. His buddy turns around and

grabs my client thinking he was falling out of the boat stopping him from getting his hands on the flying rod. The last I saw was the rod disappearing out ahead of the boat at a high rate of speed. The whole ordeal took less than five seconds. It wasn't very funny at the time because I'm sure my client had lost a good \$150.00 rod and reel, but later in the day we were joking about it. I can just hear my client telling his non fishing wife that he needed to go buy another rod and reel and his wife telling him "aren't you supposed to hang on to your rod when you get a bite"! His timing was bad that day. Score one for the fish!

Right about Mid June we had a heat wave if you recall and the river water got up to 84 degrees. That is really too hot for the fish and the small just born fry or baby fish. For a while I saw many dead big bass every day floating down the river. A good guess is that they were weak after the spawn, and the additional stress of the very warm water had a higher than usual natural mortality rate on them. This is another good reason to practice catch and release fishing on those big breeder smallmouths over 15" long because we lost many big fish that week. I see the Pa. Fish and Boat Commission is practicing what they preach now when they say their Commission theme is "Resource First" in other words, and just my opinion, putting the good of the fish resource over the wants of the fishermen. Last winter they passed a new law prohibiting the harvesting of bass during a tournament or float as we locals call it. Gone now are the days of legally harvesting every bass that was brought in to the contest for a fish fry. The brighter side is that there may be more older trophy class fish in those areas for future generations of anglers. That would be a good thing I believe.

Well that's my report for this month. For further reports, photos, and fishing tips, visit me on my website at www.ldguideservice.com. Boat safe and I'll see you on the river.

Good Fishing

Lance