

This Month With A Susquehanna River Guide Lance Dunham

May is a time of exciting fishing and nature's rebirth of the season. The trees have regained their leaves, The song birds have returned, the geese and ducks on the river have their young following them around like little puff balls on legs and who doesn't like the sweet smell of the lilacs after a spring rain cleans the air. But most of all the fishing is fantastic!

Early in May I did a TV show with Alan Probst of the "All Outdoors With Alan Probst" show. I've been doing his show now for a few years and as usual we caught many quality bass and some walleye and we always have a fun time doing so. This was the first time in all these years however that we got to start the show with some top water fishing. The sky was overcast with little to no wind, we were using those expensive Lucky Craft #85 Sammys, you know the \$15.00 lure that will make me jump in the water, scale up muddy banks and climb small trees just to get them back. To use these lures you cast them about a foot from the shore line, let them sit a few seconds then twitch your wrist to make them "Walk the dog" while you pick up the slack line on your reel. The head of the lure stays above the water line and moves left and right as you twitch your wrist. When you pause the tail is weighted and drops down so the fish will hit the back hook when he takes it. While Alan has used many top water lures in the past this was his first experience with this particular brand which acts different than other top water lures so I had an advantage over him and I used it to score a few big smallies before he got his first fish of the day. Did I give him a little off camera trash talk about catching the first fish ? You bet I did and it bit me in the butt later because by the end of the day Alan ended up catching more fish than I did. I told him it was because of my gracious guiding putting my friend on the new water first but that didn't fly because he knew I would have beaten him if I could. And what you see is what you get, two friends fishing for the day with a little friendly teasing along the way. Alan is getting better at river fishing every time we go on the water and I underestimated his angling skills that day. However I may have had the last friendly dig of the day. You see while filming Alan got a hold of a tremendous smallie, bigger than any he had ever caught before. He was using one of my light rods and this huge smallie got down river in the fast current and got off. What a disappointment, it would have made for great TV. There was nothing Alan could do but hold on with the rod bent in half and the fish ripping line off the reel. After Alan had left for the day I went back out fishing with a couple of friends for the evening. We went to the same place where Alan lost his fish and not more than 20ft away I got a hold of another huge smallie on my light rod. I managed to land this fish and it turned out to be 22" long and weighed 5lbs 2oz . Was it a new Pa. record? No, not even close but it was one of the biggest smallies I have ever caught on the river and I've caught thousands over the years. There is a photo of it on my website photo page, I don't think you can miss it, it's the biggest smallie on the page. I e-mailed Alan the

next day with the photo and told him I caught his fish for him. He called me the same day to congratulate me and remind me that he still caught the most fish of the day. Was it the same fish ? Could be, smallies that big are rare on the North Branch and it was in the same area. Great fun anyway! One of my sponsors, Just Fish Taxidermy in Stevensville Pa saw the smallie on my website and called me to congratulate me and to offer to make a reproduction mount of the fish. Kevin Raymonds is a true artist and one of the best fish taxidermist in the business so of course I accepted his gracious offer. He is going to make a habitat mount for me which shows the fish in natural surroundings with a pile of rocks and a crayfish coming out of them. The big bass will be looking down at the crayfish getting ready to strike. Reproduction fish are so lifelike that you can't tell the difference between that and a skin mount with a good taxidermist and the old breeder fish doesn't have to die which I like. That fish had to be over 13 years old. I have my photo and my catch and release angler award from the fish commission for proof of the catch and that's all I need.

Like many anglers we rig up several rods with different lures to see which is going to perform best for the day or hour with the conditions nature presents us with. I always have four rods rigged so I can cover all the water columns in the river without losing time to retie different lures on. One with top water lures such as the Lucky Craft Sammy or the Storm Chug Bug, and don't forget the good old Tiny Torpedo. One with either and suspending jerk bait or small crank bait such as the Rapala X-Rap or the Cotton Cordell Big O on it to go down to the three foot water column. One with a spinner bait on it like either of my "All Fish Spinners", or the LD Thumper for dirty dark conditions, or an in line spinner like a #3 Mepps or Blue Fox Vibrant. With these I can fish in two foot of water down to just off the bottom. Then the last one with my go to lures or the jigs like the 3" Trick Stick from Alluring Baits or the JJ's Hair Jig. I can catch fish anytime of the year with those choices.

You know, sometimes we gripe and complain about all the safety equipment we are required to have on the boat especially if we have just received a violation citation from the Water Conservation Officer, or the WCO for not having everything required. I'll tell you a little story that happened to me this month. I was just finishing a charter and we were out in the middle of no return about 8 miles from the nearest river access. I had just got the boat up on plane going close to 40MPH back to the access when BANG, a loud noise like a rifle shot came from the engine and it started to smoke. Well this was a first for me so I took the motor cover off and discovered a small fire in the back. My client quickly handed me the required fire extinguisher and I put the fire out. If I didn't have that extinguisher close and handy, the motor could have exploded along with the boats 20 gallon gas tank. Kind of makes you think doesn't it. What happened and I learned from it was that the voltage regulator got hot and blew a hole out the side of it causing the plastic on the wires to ignite. Why did it get so hot, well one reason I had too small of batteries for the big 24 volt trolling motor I use. I also have a system installed which pulls voltage from the main starting battery to the trolling batteries each time the motor is started. The

combination of having too small of trolling batteries constantly needing extra voltage from the main battery, just overworked the voltage regulator and it got too hot and blew. Not a common occurrence I assure you. Now we were a long ways from the access drifting in a boat with just the trolling to use. My first thought were to get my clients back to their car so I called my wife on the cell phone to tell her of the nearest cottage that was down river so she could pick us up I'd worry about the boat later. Then I thought I might as well call Snake Creek Marine in Montrose Pa to make an appointment to get it fixed. I talked with Allen coy the owner and told him what happened. He new exactly what happened and knew my boat so well that he told me how to bypass the regulator so it would still start! Sure enough I made my temporary repairs he suggested and the motor started right up! Thank you Allen! I called my wife and told her to forget the taxi service because we were on our way back. The next morning I took the boat to Snake Creek Marine and Allen had it repaired with a new regulator and wires, along with two new big trolling batteries and an inboard charger to extend my battery life. This was all done in about two hours and I was back on the water by noon. Now that's service! Well that's all I got room for on this months report so for further reports, photos, and charter availabilities, please visit me on my website at www.ldguideservice.com .

Good fishing and I'll see you on the river.

Lance