

This Month With a Susquehanna River Guide Lance Dunham

Well folks, this month sure was different than last month. Last month was most likely one of the toughest Octobers I've had in many years. But this month turned out to be one of the best Novembers ever! I can't remember when I've had so many 90 to 120 fish days in the first two weeks of November. Let me tell you about a few of them. On November 5th, Rich Myers came up to fish with me by himself. The sky was overcast and the water was light stained and 46 degrees. We proceeded to catch and release 106 fish with many trophy smallies in the mix. This was a new all time record for the most fish caught in one day by myself and one person. Rich was heard to say "I think on the right day a skilled fisherman could catch 100 fish by himself". This was Riches first season fishing with me and his third trip up. It didn't take him long to catch on to the patterns I used that day, and who knows, maybe some day he will indeed catch those 100 fish by himself and I hope I'm there to see him do it. The pattern that day was to use suspending jerk baits, Rapala X-Raps in size #8 to be exact, fished very, very slow. We would cast out across the slow current, jerk the lure down, and pause sometimes up to 5 seconds. The fish would most always hit on the long pause and you would need to pick up any line slack so you could feel the slight bite. Five seconds may not sound like a long time but when you're fishing it's an eternity. We used the jerk baits in water up to 5ft deep because the water was light stained enough for the fish to see the lure from the bottom of the river where the fish were holding. When we got to deeper water we would switch over to a 1/4oz lead head jig with a 3" Trick Stick from Alluring Baits on it. That day it was the LD Smallie Slammer color that caught the fish. We would cast it at the 10:00 position up river and just slightly twitch our wrists to put some life into the lure while it ticked across the rocks as slow as we could without getting caught on the bottom. It was a fun and relaxing day because we were just fishing, we had no idea that we were about to catch the record. I found out a couple of days later while checking out my web site.

The next day, Alan Probst of the "All Outdoors with Alan Probst" TV show came to finish what ended up as a three part show thanks to Mother Nature. I told you about the first attempt last month when the water was a muddy swirl. Alan came back again at the end of Oct right after we got that all day rain and freak snow storm. The water came up 3ft and muddy yet again. We tried for about a half hour, caught a couple of good smallies and realized that this also was not the day to do a fishing show. It was a good thing that Alan is a local guy and only lives about a hour and a half away. Now I'm thinking are we ever going to be able to get this show in this year or not. But Alan doesn't give up and neither do I. Which brought us up to Nov.6th. The weather was great for November. A partly sunny day, the air got up to 50 degrees and the water got up to 48 degrees with light stained conditions, a perfect day. "So how are we going to do

today” Alan asked with a grin, remembering our last two outings. I looked him in the eye and remarked, “Well I’ll tell ya Alan. If we can’t catch a bunch of good fish today we should throw out all our fishing gear, buy some Tu-Tu’s, and take up ballet”! With a painful look Alan say’s, “Now that’s something the world isn’t ready for, so we’d better catch some fish”. I agreed and catch fish we did. We proceeded to film one of the best shows, at least in terms of landing big trophy smallies, that we ever did! Now there wouldn’t be enough time on the show to see all the big fish we caught, but we had four doubles on film, meaning Alan and I both had fish on at the same time. In the four hours we were fishing we caught and released over 60 fish without the net and lost a couple of big ones by the boat as we were trying to lip them for the camera. At one point I caught a beautiful 22” walleye on a jig that was just as golden colored as they come. I reached down into the water to belly lift the fish out because as we all know, with all those teeth, you never lip a walleye. After showing the camera the fish I eased it back into the water and it headed straight back to the bottom of the river. As usual with Alan, we had a great time fishing. When we were done and floating back down river towards the access, we gave Brian, our camera man a rod and he caught another ten fish. Alan usually will give me a couple of minutes on camera to talk about a certain lure, rod or item. This time we talked a little about the N.B.S.A., or the North Branch Smallmouth Alliance. They are a non profit organization whose members are dedicated to the preservation of quality smallmouth bass fishing on the North Branch of the Susquehanna River through education and conservation. Their website is www.nbsmallmouthalliance.com and you should check it out. Anyone who is interested in catching quality smallmouth bass in the Susquehanna River should join this fine organization. They have been instrumental in placing educational signs on all the river access areas, they will be having the local fish biologist speak at their February meeting on the 10th at 6:00PM at Marks Valley View restaurant, the public is invited to attend so if you want to know what makes the river “Tick” this would be a good time to ask questions and on June 6th, they will be having a river clean up party with many great prizes if you happen to be the one to bring in the trash with the secret code marked on it and they will also be giving a free lunch afterwards to the cleanup participants.

The other trip I want to tell you about came on November 9th: The sky was clear and cold, we were in our winter garb. The water was light stained and 44 degrees. Paul Szyszko and Lou Quinn came on their annual Veterans Day weekend fishing trip. We ended up catching 127 fish, a new record for the month of November on my boat. The pattern was mainly again the jerk baits worked slow and the jigs in the deeper water. These guys have been fishing with me for many years, are always fun to fish with. Paul and I will usually use the lures that I have been catching fish on but I’m never sure what Lou is going to pull out of that tackle box of his which makes it a fun and interesting day.

As I was waiting for some clients one day this month, I watched Penn-DOT remove some trees that had been caught around the pillars of a local bridge from the spring floods. I knew there were trees down there, but I didn’t know there were so many 40ft plus sizes stuck there. No wonder the fishing was so good with all that structure hiding the fish. It was rather

interesting to watch, they had a boat with an operator and two guys in wet suits. They had a big crane up on top of the bridge that lowered a cable to the guys in the boat who fastened it to the trees. Then like a huge fishing rod, the crane pulled up the trees and placed them on the bridge where they were cut up and put in trucks to be hauled away. I'm sure the removal of the trees had to of taken a lot of pressure off the pillars and the fish would have no problem finding another hiding place. I wonder how many fishing lures were stuck to those trees, I know several of mine were. And I also couldn't help but to wonder why do this in November when the water temperature was 44 degrees and a little dangerous for the guys in the water instead of July or August when the water temperature is up around 75 to 80 degrees?

The wildlife is very abundant and active on the river now. The turkeys have been seen everyday as they cross the river from their roost to the feeding grounds. It would be easy to fill a turkey tag if one was so inclined to do so. With the rut on, we've been seeing some pretty nice bucks along the river. Some think they are hidden in the swamp brush and some that are following the doe's just don't seem to care if you see them or not, that's not on the top end of their priorities at that time. There are ducks and geese everywhere now. I saw the biggest flock of mallards I've ever seen on the river a couple of weeks back, there must have been 40 ducks in that flock. They took off right beside us as we were passing a small island and it really got your attention. Then there were the usual mink hunting along the banks. We saw one that was just huge. It could have been that it was a big male that hadn't got wet yet. His fur just shined.

Well that's all for this month, boat safely and I'll see you on the river. For further information, reports, and photos, visit me on my web site at www.ldguideservice.com .