

On The Water With A Susquehanna River Guide Lance Dunham

The month of November always brings the angler choices and challenges. The choice is to continue to fish or sit home and the challenge is that the fishing gets a little tougher. Sit home? Boy that's a no brainer, by now I've got a honey-do list that's three arm lengths long! Besides, the river is bound to freeze over some time this winter and the list can wait until then. Lookie here, I can already cross off the yard work that was needed in the summer. Let's see one down, a hundred thirteen to go, yep, time to go fishing. I love to fish when it's a challenge. Sure you catch less fish, but the fact that you catch even some fish is great and it gives you the feeling of accomplishment. The month started off with the high muddy water left over from the end of October and it got cold with the water temperature dropping down to 43 degrees. I had to reschedule a few charters until the water was safe to take out clients. So when the water was close enough for me to try it, meaning that it was mostly safe, I decided that I might need a camera man just in case a big fish was landed. Lets see, who to take on a tough, quick, fishing trip. A friend or a Sponsor. Since most of my Sponsors that I have met are now also my friends I decided that for this short notice trip I would call Dave Pelacheck of JJ's Jigs in Towanda Pa. I knew he had the day off and when I called he said he'd meet me at the river. We met at the river access and wouldn't you know it I forgot my camera. Well Dave had his cell phone camera and in a pinch it would work. Dave brought along several of his hair jigs and we went fishing for a couple of hours. The river was fast, muddy, and cold, the three things that make fishing a challenge. I took care of the fast river by fishing coves and eddies along with using the electric trolling motor to slow us down. The mud was subdued by increasing the lure profile and using a dark or black hair jig. And the cold was overcome by moving the hair jig as slow as possible on the river bottom. The fish strikes felt like a soft weight had been added to your hook and yet they fought well on the way to the boat. I caught several big old bass in those couple of hours but Dave didn't fare so well. You see Dave is as close to an expert fly fisherman as they come, but the spinning rod was pretty new to him this year so half his time was spent getting the tangles out of his reel because the cold air kept the memory coils in his fluorocarbon line from going out. The salesman had told Dave that this was the line to use, but most likely it was the line to get rid of. In cold weather my 10lb Stren Magnathin Mono line comes off the spool as if it was still July because of its 6lb diameter. I gave him one of my rods to use but he had to endure my kidding of not catching fish on his own jigs and listening to a salesman that was probably newer at spin fishing than he was. I'm sure that if we were using fly rods it would be me having the troubles. In just a few short days the river cleared up somewhat and got warmer, clear up to 45 degrees in the afternoon. Well the air got warm at least. I had a couple of young men on the boat and this time we used lead

head jigs and 3" Alluring Baits Trick Stick worms. Now we caught fish, over 60 as I recall, but I can't remember going through that many jigs in a long while, over 40 forty of them! However along the way the one young man caught a 23" Walleye and a 38" Carp close to 28lbs! It took him a good 20 minutes to land that huge fish. Both of those fish earned him a catch and release angler award from the Pa Fish And Boat Commission.

Alan Probst of the "All Outdoors With Alan Probst" TV show was up to film a cold water fishing show this month. He had only 3hrs to spare me for this show, talk about pressure to perform buddy. I wanted to take him to a new area so we took my jet boat for a 12 mile ride in the cold air and since we had such a short time I didn't spare any of the 115 horses in my Mercury Opti Max Motor to get there. The camera man was filming the wildlife along the way and his hands were beet red by the time we got there. As luck would have it, after that long ride there was a small boat exactly where I wanted to go. It wasn't the weekend and I didn't expect anyone to be there. This gave Alan a good chuckle as my mind raced for a plan B. Tick Tick Tick, the clock was running. The small boat left the area so after running all that way I decided to at least cast a few times there before we went to the next hole. I gave Alan a 3" LD Smallie Slammer from Alluring Baits to use on a 1/8oz lead head jig. I wanted to use several cold water baits on the show so while I was tying on a JJ's hair jig, Alan had already landed a couple of nice smallies in the boat and had started the show. I tied on a 1/8oz black booger hair jig and caught a couple of nice smallies before I lost it to a snag. Then I tried a brown booger hair jig and did the same. Meanwhile Alan is catching fish after fish but neither one of use has caught anything over 16" so far. Time to leave. We went to a couple of more holes and caught a few more fish but then we went to a slack water eddy and the action turned up a notch. At least for Alan it did. The man was on fire as he brought fish after fish to the boat. I had switched to a jerk bait because I had run out of my 1/8oz hair jigs and I still wanted to use something different than Alan, he was doing great and needed no help at all showing off that lure. It took me over a half hour before I had a fish on the line with the jerk bait but I got to explain on camera how we pinched the barbs down on treble hooks. Time was real short now and we were still over 6 miles from the access so I tied on a 4" Black Trick Stick and got in on the catching action with Alan. Before we left I managed to catch a fat 18" smallie which was our best for the day. There were several good walleye, northern pike, and musky areas that I passed on the way back. Maybe on the next cold water show we do we'll go there. Alan ended up catching over double of what I did because he kept with the same good producing lure for all the three hours we were out, that and he's a fine jig fisherman. I tell this to my clients all the time, "If it's working, stay with it". All the lures I used produced fish, but I spent a lot of time tying up all those different lures that could have been used fishing.

There was just one more charter that sticks in my mind for November. I fished with Rick Liebert of Eagles Mere on Friday the 13th. Yep, he picked that day on purpose. Rick had e-mailed me several times about wanting to bring a musky rod and what lure to bring

also. He ended up bringing a 7ft medium/heavy rod with 30lb braid line and a 12” 30lb steel leader. He had also bought an 8” swim bait about 2” wide that looked like an orange bellied carp. The lure had a lot of action. When we got to an area where I had told him that we had caught musky before, he started to cast. It took just three casts and I watched as a 3ft musky came up behind it and just nailed that big lure. It was very exciting indeed. After taking some photographs we let the big fish go. Now I know that the musky wasn’t big by musky standards but it was just that we called the shots right from the first e-mail. He didn’t get another musky bite for the rest of the day and switched to his bass and walleye set up to catch some fine fish. I told him right after he caught the musky that he had only 997 more casts until he catches the next one for as we all know, the musky is the fish of a thousand casts. Remember, we are in charge of our fishing future. Practice selective harvest and let those big old breeder fish go back in the river so our children and grandchildren get a chance at a big fish also. They take a very long time to grow. It’s just good for the resource and healthier for the fishermen.

Well that’s all for this month. For further reports, photos and charter information, just go to my website at www.ldguideservice.com . Be safe fishing and I’ll see you on the river.