

This Month With A Pennsylvania Fishing Guide **Lance Dunham**

Hi folks, through out my career I've received many communications from people asking me all types of questions from how to fish to complaints that I tell and show too much in the way of fishing as if it was supposed to be kept some big secret. I got an e-mail the other day from a young man of 13 who wanted to know how to fish the river with artificial lures. A huge question indeed. He had been told many things from adults on how to but he wanted to find out from a "Professional Angler". "Professional Angler", I suppose I should be flattered but that name or title has always bothered me because I've never considered myself a "Professional Angler", there are many people out there that can fish far better than me for themselves, I'm just a fishing guide. But still the title keeps popping up so I looked up the word Professional in the dictionary. And in relating to a person is "someone who is engaged in a specified activity as to one's main paid occupation rather than as a pastime". Well since it's been my main source of employment and mostly my only employment for the last 34 years with now over 250 charters a season I guess I will have to concede that I am a so called "Professional" in my chosen field of employment. Then I looked up the meaning of the word "Guide" as a noun. "A person who leads or directs other people on a journey. A person who shows and explains the interesting things along the way" Yep, that one is me alright. So I guess you could call me a "Professional Guide", but I refuse to be called a "Professional Angler", and there is a difference in at least my mind. A Professional Angler is a person making their main paid occupation as only a fisherman, mostly this would be the paid tournament anglers you see on TV some of which I have great admiration for. They have to and must be out for themselves to win the game of tournament fishing. They have to be aggressive and know how to fish and read the water so they can quickly put fish in the box for themselves. That's just the way the game is played. I call it combat fishing and it can be exciting but it's just not my style or game. There is absolutely nothing wrong with tournament fishing if the fish are properly cared for and are released unharmed. On the other hand, the Professional Fishing Guide will always put his clients well being and success ahead of his own. It's more important for the guide to put his clients over fish and for them to catch fish first, also to teach and show them how to present the proper lure the proper way for the conditions faced. I find it very refreshing and a lot of fun if I'm kept busy writing down the clients catch and taking their pictures instead of fishing myself. But make no mistake, I'll have on average seven rods each with a different lure on them to find the next pattern quickly behind my clients if the action slows down. There is a lot more to being a fishing guide than just knowing how to catch a fish, it's constantly being polite and knowing how to get along with your clients both on and off the water no matter how abusive they may become which is rare I might add for 99.9% of fishing clients are great but sometimes you need the patience of a Saint when they sink a hook in you for the second time that day. My wife sometimes finds it hard to believe that I'm constantly being thanked by my clients for having great patients with them or their children or friends on the boat when they know that their actions or skill levels were low. She is sure that they must be talking about someone else and sorry about that dear. Sure it's sometimes tough but not impossible, because to me it's just part of being a guide. It's being "PC" or politically correct, and this one I have to admit is hard for me to do sometimes but I try. A professional guide will never discuss politics or religion with a client unless you are absolutely certain that they have the same views as you! It's keeping your clients safe from bad weather even if the fish are biting and away from other boats that intentionally try to interfere with you just because you're a guide. Your clients aren't paying you to hear you argue or compete with other boaters even though you would personally love to do it. It's a big river and I will move out of the area as best I can when it gets crowded with other boats. The other boaters may look at it as if they are "chasing me out", but I look at it as protecting my clients from people who are out to spoil their day, besides I'll be back tomorrow and I'm being paid at the end of the day, they are not. It's dressing and acting like a Professional on and off the water, if you are indeed a professional you will most likely have several Sponsors that you are also representing that will expect you to act accordingly. If you have a question about one of my Sponsors or their products, please come on over to me on shore and I'll be most happy to discuss them with you and if I have some extra maybe give you a sample or two. A couple of my Sponsors give me extra lures to share outside my boat. Rage Tail Baits and Moaner Hooks come immediately to mind. It's knowing the local history, the trees, flowers, bugs and animals along the way. This area is rich in history with Gen. John Sullivan's march, the Bradford County Canal system, Standing Stone, and the French Azilum among others. If there is something I don't know today about the river you can bet I'll look it up and I'll know it by tomorrow. And the big one is refusing to be paid because for some reason, and it doesn't matter why, your client doesn't catch a fish. It's a very rare occurrence, I know, but I couldn't take someone's hard earned money if I couldn't produce what I promised and I put that in writing. My dad used to call that as having some "Class" and learning from your mistakes. Do I make mistakes? You bet I have and do but I try to improve daily. I call it being a "Professional Fishing Guide" and no, I'm not a professional angler.

Well that's all I have for this month, remember to practice C.P.R. catch, photo, and immediate release for the future of our sport, boat safely, and Ill see you "On The Water"

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