

This Month With A Susquehanna River Guide Lance Dunham

I got to say, this has been the strangest October I've ever fished. Let me tell you a little about it. Looking back through my records, October is usually a time of super easy fishing where days of catching over 100 fish was common and where it didn't matter much what lure you used it would catch fish. Remember the little novelty beer can with hooks? I've used it with success in October to prove my point in the past. But not this year! Oh it started out great, here's how it went. Monday Sept 29th, 103 fish caught, I'm feeling good. Tuesday Sept 30th, 126 fish caught, I'm ecstatic, I've got a TV show with Alan Probst on the 2nd. Wednesday Oct 1st, 161 fish caught, the best so far this season, the water is semi clear and in the low 60's, it should be so simple tomorrow I can't wait to show off for the camera! Thursday, Oct 2nd, the big day, I drive down to the access and look at the river. I can't believe it! The river is a big muddy swirl! Where did this come from, it didn't rain! Well a day or so ago it must have up in New York because it's here now and you can't see a lure 8" down in the water. Alan drives up to the access and looks at the water. Smiling he says "Looks like you got your hands full today". I smile back, "You sure you want to film today"? With a big grin he says "Don't you think you can catch a fish in chocolate water"? "Sounds like a challenge to me" I said, "Get in the boat buddy, we're going fishing".

Once in the boat I realized I really did have my hands full, and time was short because it was supposed to rain sometime today and you don't want to get a couple thousand dollar TV camera wet if you can help it. I tied on a spinner bait I make just for muddy dark water. My customers call it the LD Thumper. It's a jig spinner with a big gold plated #4 Colorado blade with a ball bearing swivel. I put a 1/4oz lead head jig with a 4" black Alluring Bait Trick Stick that has a chartreuse tip on it. This lure just shakes your rod as you use it because it has so much vibration. The fish were more disoriented in the sudden muddy water that I was. When we would get really close to a smallmouth bass, the boat would scare it and it would jump in the air, we had bass jumping close all around us. One big bass actually jumped and hit the boat with a big whack that startled us. Since we've been doing a couple of shows a season for the last few years, we are not above giving each other a little jab now and then, just like friends do when they're fishing, some of which never makes it off the cutting room floor. Alan starts to laugh, "Maybe I should just sit here and hold the net, when the fish jump I'll catch them". It was then that I announced that we have to go somewhere that the fish can see something. We went to the nearest tributary where the clear water was coming in creating a seam of muddy and clear water. I didn't have to tell Alan where to fish, he tossed the Thumper in the clear water on the lower side of the trib and brought it down along the seam. Whack! A big trophy smallie hit his lure and we were finally in business. When he released the big fish, he went ahead and caught two more in the same spot, another big smallie and one about 14". Well now I'm taking a little bit of teasing because I haven't caught a fish yet. Alan has me explain and show the pattern we are using to the camera and "Fish on", timing is

everything, a nice smallie finally comes to my end of the boat. We tried one other spot where I caught a fat 18" smallie, a nice walleye, and another 14" smallie. We didn't use a net for the show which had me a bit nervous as I was reaching down to lip them at the water because we needed every fish we could get. It was at this point I thought we could get a good show out of tough conditions today but Mother Nature had other plans. We were on the water two hours now with only seven fish and it started to rain. Alan didn't know how I got it to rain just as I pulled ahead of him by one fish. I could have said it was because of "clean living" but I didn't want to be struck by lightning. Even though we caught some quality fish for the show, there just wasn't enough footage for a half hour show. Alan will be back at the end of the month to finish the show and I'll have to tell you next month how it ends. After that day, the water kept on getting lower and slower with no rain. The green algae bloom came back, the rock moss never left, but it did get colder alright and the bite slowed down to 40 or 50 fish per day. The river is the lowest I've ever seen it for the month October and many boats are hitting the river bottom.

The second week of October has me fishing with the guys from "Delaware Valley Outdoors". It's my first show with them so I have them come during a really good fishing time. Well it was supposed to be anyway. The host Bob Murray and the producer Mike Haney are really great guys and are fun to fish with but the big smallies just didn't co-operate. We fished until about 2:00PM and caught over 40 fish but the biggest wasn't over 16". Mike said he had plenty of film for the show but would wait a while longer to see if we could get a big one to finish with. I took them to another spot and sure enough I got a hold of a trophy smallie on a jerk bait. It jumped once just to show off how big he was and I was thinking what a great fish to finish the show with because after seeing thousands of fish this season I knew he was over 18" long. I could feel him come up to jump and I would reel him down to fight in the water so I wouldn't lose him. Then he came up again with a grand leap and sent the lure back at me. You are never so good that you can't be humbled by a big smallie and I was then. We went back to the access and finished off the show by showing the lures we used and describing how to use them. Mike sent me a copy of the show and they did a great job even though I didn't catch that big smallie. You can see the video on their web site at www.delawarevalleyoutdoors.com. They will be back a couple of times next season and I'll see if I can do a little better.

The lures that worked well for us this month were, starting from the top water column, Heddens Tiny Torpedos, Storms Chug Bugs, LD Thumper and regular spinners, Rapalas X-Raps, and Alluring Baits, LD Slammer 3" Trick Sticks and 4" Trick sticks.

Some other interesting things that happened on the river was that one day I heard this loud airplane noise and was looking way up into the sky to find it only to look out the corner of my eye to see a yellow single engine airplane coming right down the river below the tree level! I thought at first it was in trouble and I was concerned because it was coming right at us, then it went up and over us with the passenger waving from the rear window. This was way too cool to see. Ride-em cowboy! We saw it again the next week but it was at least a hundred foot up from the river that time.

We have been seeing the usual wildlife on the river, mink, raccoons, deer and turkey everywhere. The eagles are still with us. There was one young eagle that must have gotten a wounded fish from a boat at one time. As we would float down the river the young eagle would fly along and land by us watching our every move. Then when we would go back up river he would fly with us and land when we stopped. That's the first time that has ever happened to me. We watched another mature eagle swoop at an osprey until it dropped the fish it was carrying. The eagle then swooped down and plucked the fish off the water while the osprey headed for parts unknown. This I've seen several times.

Sometimes you see odd animals swimming the river you don't see everyday. I've seen grey squirrels, woodchucks, and even a rabbit once swim across the river, but this time it was more dramatic. For reasons unknown to us, we saw a chipmunk swimming for all he was worth about half way across the river. To see such a tiny animal taking on such a big body of moving water got us feeling a bit sorry for the little guy so we scooped him up in our net which he promptly jumped out of. We scooped him up again and he sat on the rim as we took him for the rest of his journey across the river. We put him on the shore line and he rested a bit before going on his way. You can see a photo of him in the water and on the net at my website photo page.

Well that's my report for this month on the river. For further daily information and photos visit me on my website at www.ldguideservice.com . Boat safely and I'll see you on the river.

Good Fishing

Lance