

## This Month With A Susquehanna River Guide Lance Dunham

Rain, dark water, then mud. Rain, dark water, then mud. This is August? The wettest one I've seen in many years. If I need to find the silver lining the only thing I can say is with the water at a constant higher than average depth I haven't found any surprise rocks yet this season with my boat. Also the water temperature has stayed lower than average mostly from 70 to 76 degrees so we have been catching walleye on a regular pace for it being summer. The walleye aren't the only toothy fish that has been active lately. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of this month I had a young man from Berkeley, University of California visiting his dad who has fished with me for about the last 10 years. The water was dark stained of course and the sky was overcast. We were fishing along catching smallmouth as usual with one of my LD Thumper Spinners when the young man says he's caught on the bottom. He gives the rod a couple of hard tugs as if to get off the bottom and I tell him to hang on because his so called bottom is moving! We were only in 5ft of water but we were also next to a 10 ft hole. Right away I thought it was a big channel cat because it was staying on the bottom and I could see it was a powerful fish so I tell the young man to loosen the drag on the reel a bit because he was using one of my medium/light rods with 10lb Stren Magnathin line on it and it was bent right over. The battle went on for another 5 minutes and now I'm thinking it's something bigger but we still haven't seen it also I knew it had to be too big for my rubber catch and release net. I grabbed the 5ft long cradle net and got ready for what we now saw was a pretty big Muskie! The battle turned from a calm "Oh it's just a channel cat" to a tense "I hope I don't screw up" It's a BIG MUSKIE! The young man fought it well with probably too much instruction from me on how to fight it. It took several attempts to get the big fish to slide into the cradle but when it did I knew it was caught. I closed the cradle net like a purse and lifted him in. The powerful fish thrashed so much in the net that it took two of us to hold the net while I got the spinner out and away from those razor sharp teeth. After a couple of photos we carefully put the big fish back into the river and hung on to it's tail moving it back and forth to revive it. When it was ready to go we released the 40" Muskie to grow bigger for the next angler lucky enough to catch it. You can see this big fish on the photo page of my web site.

With August brings the heat and with the heat brings people to the water and the river is no exception. I call it "The Crazy Month". I saw every kind of watercraft on the water from advanced jet boats and air boats with the airplane motor on the back, to people floating on inner tubes and home made rafts. Saturdays have the most activity and sometimes it's like a zoo out there. I saw people swimming at the boat launch which is crazy because of all the increased activity of the boats going in and out along with people fishing from the boat access. Both of which are not only dangerous to the boaters and the people but it's also illegal to do so at that point. The jet skies or personal water craft seem to be the worst acting water craft on the river and there seems to be more and more of

them every year. They speed around and around in circles on the narrow river never going anywhere just to cause waves so they can jump over them. Well I guess everyone needs a hobby. More than one fisherman wants to accidentally cast their quarter ounce jig in their ear as they circle by his boat. This might sound like a bit of vigilantism but the WCOs, Waterway Conservation Officers, are spread so thin these days with cutbacks and expanding territories that they never seem to be around on Saturdays when they are most needed. They are probably on some other body of water where they have even worse problems.

Talk about crazy, I could write a book about the crazy things I see on the river. Let me tell you about a guy I saw while fishing the river one weekend this month. I was fishing some flats in about 3ft of water which shallowed up to less than a foot then there is maybe a 2ft deep boating channel along the edge where the jet boats must travel up on plane to get up and down the river safely because there are some rocks that would only be inches below the surface. As long as they keep up on plane this is a perfectly safe practice. So here comes this gentleman with his fishing rod and starts wading out onto the flats. Nothing strange about that, it was a hot day and he was only waist high in the water. However, he wades over to the boating channel and SITS DOWN so only his chest and head is above the water and starts casting into the boat channel! I'm sure it was very relaxing but a very dumb thing to do. Sure enough here comes a jet boat up the channel and because of the terrain he doesn't see the fisherman until he is about seventy foot away. The boat can't slow down for to do so would cause the boat to hit the rocks and cause an accident with thousands of dollars to repair his boat and motor and would most likely eject the boat passengers onto the rocks. To avoid a serious accident the boater did exactly what I would have done. Stay the course, keep your speed up, and safely go around the dumb wader who was now yelling and getting up. The boat missed the wader by a good 10ft but the water wake of the boat knocked the wader right over. I'm sorry and I apologize to all the river waders out there but I thought this to be very amusing and I hoped the wader learned a good lesson about fishing near a boat channel. Yes, the wader had every right to fish where he pleases and maybe he doesn't know a river boating channel from a TV channel but you need to exercise some common sense when on the river to stay out of harms way and by fishing where he did, the wader was an accident waiting to happen. He had to of seen several boats using that very same channel on his way over there and would it hurt to wear an orange hat? You can't rely on signs or officers to tell you what to do and where to go because it would be impossible to mark all or any boat channels in the river due to the high water changes that would take them out anyway. On his way back to shore the wader was furious that he got "waked". He was on a vengeful mission to call the Fish Commission to report the boat for a violation. As he made his way past me he wanted to know if I witnessed the incident. I said I sure did, I saw you nearly causing an accident by fishing in the boat channel which made him sputter and curse even more. I asked him if he would go sit by the hard road and play cards? He said of course not that would be stupid, the cars might, and he paused, took a

deep breath and smiled. He waved and went on. The gentleman was smart enough to know he just learned a good lesson.

We had an interesting sight this month. The morning was foggy and the light of the day was just breaking through. A whitetail buck came out of the woods and started to swim across the river. His antlers were still in velvet and I could see three points on one side and two on the other. I picked up my camera because you don't see this everyday and looked into the view finder only to see the words "Empty Battery" in bright red. Oh Man! It was like a hunter aiming at a buck the first day of the season only to find out his gun was empty when he pulled the trigger. I knew I had more batteries stored in my boat locker and scrambled to find them. My boat locker is like Grandma's purse, it's got everything in there but I just need to dig around to find it and it sometimes takes a bit of time. The buck was already on the far shore before I got the new batteries in the camera but to my surprise there must have been something on the other side he didn't like and he turned and started to swim back across the river! This time I was ready and captured the event on film.

It's hurricane season down south and as predicted those beautiful pure white great herons are starting to show up now, they seem to get pushed up North by the storms. I saw several this week. And the resident Canada geese are forming big flocks now on the river, hunting season is just around the corner. Well that's about all the space I should use for this month. For further reports, photos, and charter information visit me on my web sight at [www.ldguideservice.com](http://www.ldguideservice.com) . Good fishing and I'll see you on the river.