

This Month With A Susquehanna River Guide Lance Dunham

This month started off with higher than average water which was nice for safe boating but it still was dirty brown to muddy in color making it difficult for the fish to find our lures. One way we overcame this was to paint our medium sized crank baits black in color because black is the best contrast color in dark muddy conditions. Nothing fancy, we didn't paint eyes on the lure or anything like that, just used a good spray paint and covered the entire lure except for the clear bill if it had one which was covered with tape before painting. This little trick landed us at least 30% more fish compared to other colors. The LD Thumper spinner still produced a good amount of fish as did the LD All Fish Spinner with their big gold Colorado Blades. As the river went down and slightly cleared up some, the water turned a greenish brown color because of the algae now in the water and the bothersome rock moss or snot grass as the locals call it. The jigs are working well now. I use either the Alluring Baits Trick Stick or JJ's Hair Jigs and don't forget the good old tube jig. We had some good success with the 3" black tubes when the others slowed down. The suspending jerk baits such as the Rapala X-Rap have started to work well now that the water is less dirty.

July also started the easy fishing season for kids. I traditionally start to have more kids come fishing with their parents or grandparents in this month and the next. One in particular that I remember was what I call the "Granddad that did it right trip". He booked me for the entire day but spread out the fishing and the resting so the kids didn't get bored or tired. They arrived at 9:00AM and after explaining a few things about the boat and safety along with giving them their special lucky LD Guide fishing hats we got underway on the water. The boy was 6 yrs old and the girl was 9 yrs old. These children had never caught a fish before so this was all new to them. Granddad had already got them somewhat familiar with their push button rods he got for them at home. Before the trip we had agreed to let the kids boat all the fish to keep their interest up. The very first fish of the day was a beautiful 16" smallmouth I hooked at the current edge of a slow water eddy. I quickly got the young boy beside me and gave him my rod. The fish was so strong I had to hold up the rod with my finger while he fought the fish. When he got the fish close to the boat I netted it for him. The yells and squeals of happiness filled the river valley as we got ready to take a picture of his very first fish. I explained to him that the fish was at least 8 years old and he was surprised that the fish was older than him! Before I had the chance to tell him it was time to let it go he already had said to the fish it was time to go back swimming and we let it go. It was apparent to me that Granddad had been schooling the children about resource conservation. I don't know who was more proud of the boy, him or me! Soon Granddad had a fish on and gave his rod to his granddaughter. She boated her first fish and the scene repeated itself. This went on and on for the first two hours and then it was lunch time for the kids. Kids love to ride in my jet boat and that day was no exception. The little boy kept on asking when we were going to go fast with

the boat and his smile was ear to ear as we skimmed over the water. Lunch lasted for an hour and we went back on the river for another two hours. The boy was a little tired so he stayed with his grandmother and the 9 year old girl went with us. Soon she was casting with her push button rod and catching not only smallmouth bass all on her own, but she also caught her first rock bass and walleye all by herself! After watching us with the open faced reels, she picked up her granddads rod and within a short time was casting with his spinning rod and reel. The kids ended up boating about 30 fish that day and we lost many more. The day was truly enjoyable for me and as the granddad put it, "Priceless". He watched as his grandchildren caught their first fish ever. He saw his granddaughter catch her first walleye and rock bass. He watched as his granddaughter start casting rather well with a spinning rod. All much more than he could ever expect for the day. Just priceless! We kept it simple that day and all the fish were caught on the LD All Fish Spinners. All the kids had to do was cast and reel. Fishing doesn't always come out as we plan, but I'm sure glad it did that day. You can see the kids photos and their fish in my photo gallery on my website.

All of my days on the water are great, but when you can give a customer a "First", it's special. Another such charter I had this month was with two college professors from Brazil. One was doing science research at the University of Pittsburg and one was visiting. The one professor that was visiting had already been fishing ten years in Brazil and wanted to catch his first fish in America but the other had never caught a fish anywhere. Sometimes the language barrier was difficult but they took it easy on me and spoke English as much as they possibly could. The language may have been different but the universal understanding of angling brought us together as fishermen. We caught a lot of fish that day and some that were in the 18" range. The professor that had never caught a fish before ended up with eleven smallmouth bass in between the crossword puzzle he was doing while the other professor seldom put his rod down and caught the biggest bass of the day. I had another "First" with a client this month. Each year I give away a free trip to the clients that catch the most fish in one day the previous year. This year it went to a couple of guys that have been fishing with me for ten years. Last season they caught 163 fish in one day. They are good fishermen as they have won this trip three other times throughout the years. They had called me earlier and they said that they wanted to do a shore lunch and that they were doing the cooking and bringing the food and that I was to be their guest! This was a first for me to be treated to a shore lunch and not be the cook. We had half pound hamburgers and shrimp on the grill. It tasted great and I was really full. The only downfall was that afterwards I wished I had a hammock to take a snooze in. I was that relaxed. We caught 81 fish that day and I'm sure that if we didn't take that 1 1/2 hr shore lunch break we would have caught over a hundred, but it didn't seem to matter that day.

There is lots of wildlife on the river this month. We had counted 9 different eagles one day including the young ones in a 10 mile stretch . I'm seeing only one osprey a week now. It seems that the eagles are pushing them out of the area. I watched one day as an

eagle harassed an osprey until he dropped the fish he caught then the eagle swooped down and picked up the dropped fish to claim as his own. We saw two huge snapping turtles in the shallow water at a distance. The bigger one pushed the other up on the gravel shore. I took my camera and investigated. Seems it was a pair of turtles and they were in the process of shall we say, making more snapping turtles. The big male with about a 20" shell went back to the shallow water with his head up and mouth open as if he was daring me to come close. The female with a 18" shell stayed on the shore and just ignored me as I took a picture of her. Their pictures are also on the photo page of my web site. Early in the month we saw a colony of bank swallows about 50 or so strong. They bore holes in the river bank to nest and there were at least 50 holes about 10" apart from each other on the bank. The swallows were so concentrated there that it reminded me of a bee hive with all the bees going in and out of the hive. Then there was the 30" water snake who was trying to pull a 10" bullhead fish up the side of the river bank. He had a firm grip on the bullhead and the fish was flopping around but the snake never let go of his meal. That snake will have a tough time eating that fish alright. Well that's all I have for this month. For further reports and photos along with chartering information visit my website at www.ldguideservice.com.

Good fishing and I'll see you on the river.

Lance