

## This Month With A Susquehanna River Guide Lance Dunham

This was a great month for fishing the river. Halfway through the month the river finally cleared up some so that we could again catch 60 to 100 fish per day if you knew what you were doing. The month started out with rain and therefore muddy water just like all summer long. If you didn't know how to fish in muddy water you might as well have stayed home. I happen to know a few tricks for the dark water so we fished every day. I had a client who fished with me for two days with his grown up son. It was tough fishing but we got some slammer fish. We were fishing with my LD Thumper spinners along with some big tube jigs. Remember folks when the dark water and mud comes, increase the profile of your lures and slow down your presentation. My client was using the good old Thumper, slow rolling it across the bottom when he got a big one on. The fight took about five minutes which seemed like an eternity when you're waiting with the net. He played the big fish well and it ended up being a 20" smallmouth and one of the fattest smallies I've ever seen for a fish that long. I know it was at least 5 lbs. It's belly was just sagging! Then water cooled down to the 63 to 69 degree level and we could start to again fish with some surface lure action. It wasn't a fantastic top water bite to start with but at least it was there and it's getting better every day. I was using some of my standard surface lures like the Storm Chug Bug, Reble Pop-R, and the expensive \$15.00 Lucky Craft Sammy that I loved so much in the spring and had been doing ok with them but then I got a call halfway through the month from a gentleman by the name of Steve Monoyoudis who just last year bought the machinery and the rights to make the old Hubs Chub from HC Baits again. Steve and I talked on the phone for about an hour and I could tell he was a die hard angler like myself. He was referred to me by Alan Probst of the "All Outdoors With Alan Probst" show. Alan and I always try to start the filming day with surface lures if the conditions are right. If any of you remember Billy Westmorland who had a TV show on smallmouth fishing many years ago and had a theme song that went "I love smallmouth fishing most of all", he used the Hubs Chub on his show which interested me enough to buy one. I've long since lost that lure and you couldn't find any to buy them anymore so I completely forgot about it until Steve called me many years later. The lures are now completely made in good old Pennsylvania and they have improved on the old lure style. The first day I received my Hubs Chubs I tried them out. It was no surprise to me that they worked just fine. This surface lure is unique in that you can use it three ways on the water. It has a prop on the back so you can use it with a constant retrieve like a buzz bait. The nose of the lure is tapered up so you can "walk the dog" making the head go left and right above the surface like a Zara Spook or a Lucky Craft Sammy and the sides of the

lure have scoops cut in so the lure can spit water by giving it a sharp jerk. It also has a rattle chamber for an additional fish attention action. When you pause the tail drops down in the water so the fish will get a positive hook up when they strike. I personally like to use the short jerk presentation so it spits a little water. They come in 10 different colors and 2 sizes, a 3" and a 4" size so you can use them for not only smallmouth bass but also largemouth bass, pike and muskie. They also are priced at less than half the cost of a Lucky Craft Sammy so you don't worry as much if you cast one into a tree like I do on occasion when I'm talking more than fishing. To see and order these lures you can go to their web site at [www.hcbaits.com](http://www.hcbaits.com)

We were fishing towards the end of the month one day when the conditions were just right for surface lures. The morning started out dead calm, no wind at all. The sky was overcast and the water was clear down to 2ft and only light stained after that. You could see a mayfly hatch coming up and actually see the smallmouth bass on the surface of the water. I tied on the new 3" Hubs Chub surface lures on all of us and we had a fisherman's dream morning. The bass just smashed those lures all morning. We caught forty, 14" to 20" smallmouth in just 3 hours! Then the clouds broke up and let the sun shine through and then the bite was gone. In the last 4 hours we caught another thirty bass on lead head jigs and 3" brown curly tail grubs just like the old days.

The walleyes are biting now with the cooler water and I've been mostly getting them on the 3" Trick Stick by Alluring Baits in the green pumpkin with the chartreuse tip and the Shorty hair jigs from JJ's Hair Jigs in black, brown, or olive color. We have also been catching some good sized northern pike up to 3ft and smaller muskie on the suspending jerk baits.

The wildlife on the river is quite active these days. We were fishing along the second week of September and it got quite hot around mid day. We looked up and saw a bear about 150 lbs come out of the woods and head to the river to cool off. He was aware and a little worried about us but soon found out that we posed no threat to him and went into the river up to his chest. What did scare him was a beaver who didn't want him there and slapped his tail making the bear jump each time he did it. Finally the bear had enough of the beaver and went back into the woods. You can see several photos I took of him on my web site photo page.

Heads up! Next month is October and it's also the start of the change in bass regulations for the streams and rivers in Pa. The minimum size limit to keep a bass goes from 12" to 15" and the daily limit goes from 6 bass to 4 bass. Many anglers fail to read their rule summery book on that and receive a violation citation for short fish or having over the daily limit. I personally don't harvest smallmouth bass on the river and since the 15" smallmouth are about 7 to 8 years old in the upper North Branch of the Susquehanna River and a 20" smallie is a teenager, I think it is a moral sin and also very unhealthy to kill a big old breeder fish just to fill your stomach for a few minutes. The longer time span a fish is in the river, the longer it has to absorb the heavy metals like mercury and PCB's which is very harmful to humans so why eat them. Since it is so easy to catch the old breeders in October I can't

understand why the Fish Commission even allows it. Are they trying to thin out the big breeder sport fish or the angler humans by only allowing them eat the older fish with more contaminants? I'm pretty sure it's not the latter but I do think the law should be changed to a slot limit. Such as for those who wish to eat the bass, let them keep the safer 12" to 14" fish and cut that down to 4 fish per day starting in October. Save the 15" to 20" bass for the sportsman catch and release anglers which the statistics shown to me by the Fish Commission is the majority of the anglers anyway, and let them keep just 1 smallmouth bass over 20" for a wall mount even though the new reproduction fish mounts are far better. I would think that this would be a win-win arrangement for all concerned, the smallmouth bass and the long term anglers health. It would only take a few years and we could all be enjoying the sporting challenge of catching many big quality smallmouth bass on the river. Well that's all for this month. For further reports, photos, and chartering information visit me on my website at [www.ldguideservice.com](http://www.ldguideservice.com) . Fish safe and I'll see you on the river.

Good fishing

Lance