A Good Year for the Lehigh Trout

The 2017 dollars spent on trout stocking surpassed the amount spent in years past, more than $34,000 on fish, which I believe could be a record. As a result, more trout excitement was had by those who ventured to the Lehigh for angling in our stocking range—from Glen Onoko and down through Jim Thorpe, Packer ton, Lehighton, Parryville, Bowmanstown, Palmerton, Slatington, Walnutport, Treichlers, Laurys Station to below the falls in Northampton. The LRSA expects many of the brown trout to hold over as they have been known to do and that some of them found tributaries for spawning in the fall. Our stocked trout contributing to the known and growing wild trout population in the Lehigh, evidenced by browns caught < 11”. The rainbow trout have also generated a lot of excitement as well and wild rainbow have been spotted in the gorge. LRSA set records this year for the number of 20-30” trout stocked during the Lunkerfest competition in May and there were many instances of trophy fish catches (as well as stories about the ones that got away).

With all the good that has come with the 2017 stocking, the down side was that we exceeded the budgeted funds and fell short of our 800 member goal so had to dip into the grant money that we had earmarked for other club investments. The LRSA has a solid financial balance going into the 2018 season but this year we will need to refocus on stocking only the $25,000 budgeted unless more revenue is received. In addition, the LRSA board has voted to increase the basic membership from $25 to $30, which will go into affect on January 1st. Those who renew prior to that date will be at the previous rate.

This year we plan to spend $25,000 for fish at a nominal price of $4-5/fish about ~5,000 trout 12-15” and will again take out a loan for early purchase discounts of 7%. The Lunkerfest in May is self-funded and will add another $5,000 (~500 large trout. There will also be about 2,000 co-op trout stocked (~12 inch size).

This year the LRSA will be taking a close look at options for reducing our trout purchase and delivery costs. We have been very pleased with the quality of the trout received from Big Brown in Effort, who has supplied all our trout (except the Co-Op nursery raised trout) the last two years. The trout colors have been vibrant and the fins have been in great shape, some of us like to think many of the brown trout we stock could pass for wild. We have also been very satisfied with the delivery service that has cheerfully met our demanding stocking routes. However, there is another trout supplier who LRSA has used in the past, Telico, who raise their trout in North Carolina and use S&A trout farm in Schuylkill County to stage delivery of the trout in this region. The LRSA will be reviewing the opportunity to get more trout for the same money and are considering one stocking to be supplied by Telico, possibly the May stocking, on a trial basis if the price advantage is significant and they do well in our site visit to review trout quality.

Thank you also for purchasing or selling the Winter Tickets Drawing. This is a critical fund raiser to support our trout stocking program. —LRSA
LRSA stocks trout in four main areas along the 29 miles of river between Northampton and Jim Thorpe. A listing of most popular spots are:

Jim Thorpe—use the train station parking lot where the rafters put in (it is just below the 903 bridge). Or, you can walk up river a bit. Also try Glen Onoko—all the river and stay left into the park. There is a great trout pool a short walk from the parking lot, or you can walk or ride a bike upstream into the gorge to Park Bench, Bear Creek trib area is also very good.

Packerton—pull off 209 where the road dips down steeply between Lehighton and Jim Thorpe. You can park and walk straight back to the river, lots of good access there. Head down river about 100 yards to pump house and you will find a riffle with a deep pool behind it.

Lehighton—Make a right off of 209 at Dunbar’s Beverages and take the road all the way back to the rocky beach near the river. Or, drive down stream on the access road that runs parallel to route 209 and walk in.

Parryville—Pull off route 248 at the Rock Hill Cement Company and park at the Canal Park area. The Pohopoco Creek confluence with the Lehigh provides very good, cold, conditions for trout. The Pohopoco holds fish too, particularly below the dam.

Bowmanstown—Fishing is good above or below the Route 895 bridge. You can park under the bridge. Or, drive down to the new boat ramp about 1/2 mile south of Lizard Creek, on west side of river; we call the large pool the “Musky Pool” and it is where we hold Lunkerfest.

Palmerton—Head south on 248 and take the Palmerton exit. Take the second dirt road to the right and head down to the “horseshoe.” The river forms a big bend in that area and there is a pool just below the rapids.

Slatington—Heading east on 248, take a right over the 873 bridge and you will see Slatington Fabricators on your left. You can find a place to park along the road at that point and walk in access to the river (you will pass the Slatington Bros. building). This spot is just below the riffles and there are lots of good fishing pools in that area.

Walnutport—Head into Walnutport and Canal Park on the east side of the river just below the Main Street Bridge. Head down to the pavilion (about 1/4 mile downstream) and walk to the river. The canal runs about one mile down to Bertsch Creek. You will find many good pools along the way.

Treichlers—Heading north on Route 145, take a right onto Cove Road before you get to the bridge. Drive down and park under the bridge. Fish there or head up stream to the fantastic pool just below the old dam.

Laurys Station—Take River Road on right as you are heading North on Route 14. Drive down and park at the dead end.

Northampton—Fish below the dam where Route 329 crosses the Lehigh. Anywhere from the dam down to the pavilion area is a good area for fishing.

---

If you shop Amazon, please shop smile.amazon.com and designate LRSA to receive a portion of the sale be donated to our non profit organization.
As the changing colors usher in a cornucopia of beloved activities; I realize why fall is my favorite time of year. I find that I am possessed by a mania that beckons me to the Pennsylvania woods and waters like Ahab to pasty white whales. The Lehigh is particularly delicious in the fall and it puts on a colorful face that makes it seem like a different river. October transforms the Lehigh River. Its waters clear like the autumn air that it fills with steam each morning. Seasonal smells and the lack of humidity dramatically change the feel of this waterway and fall visits make it seem like you are experiencing an exclusive side of the Lehigh that many choose to forego.

I have to admit that I am equally tempted to take to my favorite deer stands as I am to fish now: to watch and hear rutting deer crash their way through fall’s splendor. I love the smells, crackly noises, and feel of the autumn woods. Pheasant season is also here and there is no describing the smell of cornstalks and burnt gunpowder on a crisp October morning. Such is my madness.

But, I never overlook the Lehigh in October. Fall fishing is some of the most enjoyable and I am preparing to make the last of my visits to the river before the falling leaves tell me that it’s time to give my fly rod a rest. The bites and fish are subdued like our moods after summer passes. You are likely to see tiny flies now, subtle rises, and feeding patterns that ebb and flow with the changes in temperature. The Lehigh is more demure, absent are the rafters and the constant roar of Harley Davidsons that tend to distract me from fully appreciating the river.

This year I am hoping to recreate an experience that I enjoyed last November. I lost a big brown trout near the Bowmanstown islands. I had been fishing that spot for a solid two hours without even a hint of fish interest. So, I was thinking about initiating my last cast routine: that typically lasts for about fifty casts. Not long afterward, I took a step or two downstream and made a long cast across a new section of the glide. I was tailing and stripping a big Muddler: offered with a sinking line and 4x tippet. My hope was to instigate a hard take from an aggressive fall trout.

I don’t remember if it was that cast, or the next seven. But I do remember the unexpected strike. It is what I was looking for and then some… Even though I was properly fortified with sturdy tippet, I was very lucky the fish didn’t relieve me of the fly. The strike was a ripper of a take… that kept on going as the big fish plowed downstream! I was into my backing in not many seconds and enjoyed the head thrashing he telegraphed back to me after completing his sprint. I had all but declared victory when the fish started chugging towards me. I remember taking up line to keep tension on him, when he unceremoniously went missing. I was looking forward to seeing that trout and its fall colors, and figured that I was down to the last five minutes or so of ins and outs before you offer the net. The trout felt like a brown that was better than 20 inches, possibly a Lunkerfest survivor. I enjoyed the encounter very much.

In the pools of my memory, he is still present; I may pay him a visit around lunch time.
Lehigh River Fly Fishing Journal by Tom Gyory

Fall presents a lot of fishing opportunities on the Lehigh River and beyond. The warm dry weather allowed an extended season of not only the usual fall nymph fishing but also some dry fly fishing and swinging wet flies.

I was shown a new technique recently by LRSA member Bill Barkley using a switch rod for trout. I was drifting down the river one late summer day and saw Bill switch casting. I pulled up to Bill to ask about his set up. He offered me a chance to cast his rod and on the first cast I caught an 18 inch brown. I was hooked. He called me later to discuss the details.

A switch rod is a two handed 10-13 foot fly rod that is more commonly used for steel head or salmon fishing. The set up for trout is a 3-5 weight 12 foot switch rod along with a Skagit line setup and multiple flies (see diagram below).

The advantage to a switch rod over a regular fly rod is that it is more effective for swinging wet flies in large rivers like the Lehigh because it reaches much farther across the river and the flies stay in the center of the current longer where the fish are feeding. The casting technique is similar to the Spey method using D loops and anchoring techniques to load the rod. (Check out You Tube to see videos.) With practice, you can easily cast 70-80 feet. Once the cast is made, point the rod downstream, let the line swing and wait for the strike. The trout strikes can be very aggressive so hold on.

The fly set up is two or three flies in tandem usually with the largest heavier flies first and then decreasing size. My lucky setup on the Lehigh was a #10 golden stone fly followed by a #12 prince nymph and a #14 pheasant tail or hare’s ear.

Switch rods and shooting heads are available at most retailers for $300-500. I found some very good quality off brand rods on ebay for under $100 and line for $30. I used a slightly oversized large arbor reel (8 wt) to better balance the longer rod. I really enjoyed the new fly fishing technique and the results that came with the effort. Give it a try if you can.

Catch you on the Lehigh!

PS. Update on the Coop Nursery and Streamside Hatch box—We had a fish kill of about 10% of the coop nursery trout in September due to the hot dry conditions and a common fish illness. The PA Fish and Boat provided a helpful solution using a salt technique to get the situation under control.

The Witlock-Vibert Box program was rebuilt after the flooding in the spring washed the box down river. 5000 brown trout will be hatch around Thanksgiving in the new box (see the construction video on our Facebook page under posts July 25,2017—photos on page 5). We are getting a lot of inquiries from other clubs about setting up their own programs.

Thanks to Willie

The LRSA would like to thank Willie Marx for his contributions from his Bait & Tackle Shop (see ad on page 5) where $400 were donated recently and his promotion of the LRSA and our merchandise at his shop. Thank you Willie!

Your Membership Number Raffle

This year the LRSA wanted to place more value on your individual membership number. As you know, each membership card carries a number and this was used for a raffle of three prizes. Congratulations to the first prize winner: John Croman of Lehighton who won a guided float trip on the Lehigh with Mr. Tom Gyory. 2nd and 3rd place winners were Dennis Balliet of Jim Thorpe and William Hoseir of Lehighton. Both won wading trips with Steve Chuckra and Vince Spaits. We hope this member number might act as an incentive for more people to become sponsors! Let us know what you think. — LRSA
Dean Lakatosh—We lost Dean in 2017, a long time LRSA member and Lehigh River trout fisherman. More than $900 was donated in his memory from the funeral proceeds. Thank you to the Lakatosh and Hock families, we will use the funds to add life to the Lehigh in the form of many trout.

I’ve been floating the Lehigh with a fiberglass boat that I made this year. Quite impressed w/ the trout on the Lehigh. I’m used to going up the West Branch of the Delaware, which is a long drive compared to the Lehigh River that is less than a 30 minute drive. On Saturday (in September) caught a nice brownie south of Palmerton on a fly rod. Thanks for your efforts.

Words from LRSA past President Frank Bostick on Catch and Release (taken from the spring newsletter in 1999) - ...One more thing — good luck fishing this spring. I hope you all catch the biggest trout of your lives and lots of others too. But, please, keep only those you will eat and return the rest to grow bigger and brighten someone else’s day. You don’t need to keep them all to be a hero — just so you can give them away or let them get freezer-burned. It just doesn’t make sense. Remember, if you keep them, the limit is eight fish. If you release them, you can catch 50 in one day. Which sounds better for you AND the River? If everyone helps, we can make the Lehigh the best body of water for fishing in the state. So keep what you alone can use and release the rest. See ya’ll on the Lehigh!

Ticket Winners

The late fall ticket drawing winners are laid out in the photo at left. The drawing number is indicated. Thanks everyone very much for your support!
Good Bye Wet Fly— Brian Tarter (reprint from Spring Newsletter 1999)

“I don’t think so!” The history of the wet fly goes back hundreds of years to the beginning of angling. There have been many books written with references made to attaching fur and feathers to a hook to angle for fish. The beginning of fly fishing in this country can be traced back to the Lehigh Valley and Pocono streams. The Aquashicola, Big Creek, Bushkill, Broadhead and the legendary Henryville Branch are where it all started. There were many great fishermen who fished these waters, some legends who lived and worked in the area. There have been books written and memorials erected in their honor on local streams. This is when the wet fly was “King of the Waters”.

When I think of wet fly fishing it takes me back many years to my early childhood. My father was a great fisherman known for catching the really “big ones”. He introduced me to fly fishing at an early age. Maybe, I was about 3 or 4 years old. My Dad always had time to take me fishing. Those early years consisted mostly of bait fishing for trout and panfish, but I was always wondering why I could never catch those fish that were jumping and splashing. My Dad explained they were chasing flies and that they would not take bait. That day, which I will always remember, I told my Dad the day would come when I would catch those fish. Little did I know what an adventure I was about to embark on.

Living across the street from the Aquashicola Creek was a definite advantage for me. The fact that I lived next door to a fly fisherman and a professional fly tyer didn't hurt either. I couldn't wait to see how these flies were made. It was easy to see that flies caught lots of fish! The proof was in the old willow baskets, which as a young fisherman, I inspected every chance I got. Fishing those early years was really quite simple; rod, reel, line and a few wet flies and a shirt for bring home fish. Catch and release had not yet entered the picture. Even at the early age of 10, I realized that if I put some fish back, I could catch them again another day. It sort of made sense at the time. This was not taken lightly by the other fishermen on the streams I fished. I made a habit of “accidentally” dropping fish while I removed the hook. I didn't get harassed as much.

New Member Category

The board has consulted with Lehigh River drift boat operators and have determined we will create a new member category for drift boat operators. This will begin January 1 and will be priced at $50 per year.
New RR Bridge Construction below Glen Onoko

We are proud to do what we can to keep the Lehigh clean and getting cleaner and the trout population as abundant as possible. With this in mind, it was of considerable concern when I saw the west bank of the Lehigh, just north of the Nesquehoning Bridge (on access road to Glen Onoko), had been clear cut by the railroad company to make way for the new train bridge. As far as we could see, no erosion controls were put in place. Hopefully things are better now than when this picture was snapped in late August. — LRSA

Healthy, Vibrant Trout Releases—Thanks to a Clean River

The LRSA has been fortunate in our success rate of releasing healthy, lively trout into the river without experiencing fish kills. In the past ten years I can recall only once that we lost some trout when a strong rain event occurred the evening after stocking and for some reason caused a large number of trout lost in the Walnutport area. Some of you who have been involved since the 1990s may recall the fish kill experienced in 1995, that claimed all of the large trout and about 10% of the overall total stocked between Bowmanstown and Walnutport. The cause of that fish kill was studied extensively by DEP (DER at that time) who concluded it was most likely due to river temperatures. However, the LRSA's scientist at that time, Bob Miller, a Parkland High School Biology teacher and leader of the Lehigh River Watch Program there, found that the pH in Lizard Creek had increased to 12. Trout can handle pH up to about 8.5 pH but when calcium and aluminum ion concentrations also climb this damages fish gills. High pH and calcium contribute to the toxicity of aluminum, which was measured to be over 500 ug/l, and the trout gills turn purple to blue and death occurs from hypoxemia, or low body oxygen. I was surprised to learn that aluminum is the third most abundant element in the earth’s crust so it frequently gets leached from soils or clays.

It is believed that at that time, storm water had washed concrete from the formed concrete products in the facility adjacent to Lizard Creek and washed into the Lehigh and thought by the LRSA team to be the cause of the fish kill. Since then, measures have been taken at that facility to prevent this from occurring again. However, after reviewing this, I am now wondering if the rain event might have again washed concrete into the river during that more recent fish kill event and that high pH and aluminum were again the culprit. — LRSA
2017 Annual Tributary Survey—Matt MacConnell

On Sunday August 27th the annual Lehigh River tributary survey was conducted. The Hach Datasonde 5 water quality monitor had been calibrated in the morning and first stop was Jordan Creek in Allentown at 8:30 and concluded after traveling 55 miles at the Nesquehoning Creek in Jim Thorpe at 1:00 pm. We move as quickly as possible so that the stream conditions are all collected in the morning as to minimize variability from warming ambient temperature. A video is available on facebook with clips taken at each stop along the way. We can see the pH decreases as we head north where presumably the streams have less lime stone. Specific conductance also decreases because the water contains less dissolved solids. The Lausanne Tunnel is a mine drainage site and that is the highest in dissolved solids. Nitrates are higher in the southern tribs with highest values in Fells and Catasauqua Creeks. The coolest trib was Mauch Chunk followed by Catasauqua Creek, but all tribs were cooler than the Lehigh itself. Next year we will supplement the trib survey with estimated flow rates, which will help to emphasize relative priority.

In addition, this year we are beginning plans to work with Trout Unlimited to determine which of the tributaries are supporting trout spawning. Once we confirm which tribs have wild trout, we will work to evaluate the numbers of wild trout there are in these tribs. The LRSA would like to support the best possible practice to avoid stocking on top of wild trout. It will be important to know which tributaries are contributing wild trout to the Lehigh main stem and possibly we will modify our stocking plans accordingly. Next year for example the LRSA will be doing an experiment where we will not stock the mile around the Pohopoco Creek confluence as we know there are wild trout in the Pohopoco Creek and that this is a thermal refuge for Lehigh trout.
The Body of Every Organization has Four Bones—by Larry Loch (Past President of LRSA, circa 1995)

1. WISHBONE—Those who wish someone else would do all the work.
2. JAWBONE—those who do all the talking but little else.
3. KNUCKLEBONE—Those who knock everything anyone else tries to do.
4. BACKBONE—Those who get under the load and do all the work.

Are you an active member?

The kind that would be missed. Or are you just content to be on the list? Do you attend meetings or mingle with the flock? Or do you stay at home to criticize and knock? Do you take an active part to help the work get done? Or are you satisfied just to belong?

Think it over. LRSA appreciates anything you can do to help advance the Lehigh River trout fishery. Thank you.

More team work moving a bucket brigade of trout down the steep banks common along the Lehigh.

LRSA Crossword Puzzle

Our first try at a LRSA CW puzzle for your enjoyment.

Stocking Plan Modification for Wild Trout Study

The LRSA has received reports of many wild brown trout (~11”) being caught in the Parryville area adjacent to the confluence with the Pohopoco Creek, which is a designated exceptional value (EV) stream. The LRSA would like to evaluate how the trout fishing and creel reports change if we do not stock the area in Parryville. The LRSA will partner with Sky Blue Outfitters (Nick Raftas, Mike Stanislaw) who will use online creel survey applications to document this. Given the attraction of the cold water coming from the Pohopoco, we expect that LRSA stocked trout will find their way to Parryville from points north and south to some extent in either case. We will apply the Parryville trout as additional fish in Lehighton and Bowmanstown. — LRSA
LRSA Board of Directors:

Vincent Spaits
Tom Gyory, DMD
Greg Gliwa
Karl Imdorf
Matt MacConnell, PE
Jim Deebel
Chuck Morgenstern
Steve Chuckra
Gary Klein

LRSA Officers:

President: Matt MacConnell, 610-657-2707
Vice President: Steve Chuckra, 570-249-9247
Treasurer: Tom Gyory, 610-730-9359
Merchandise: Chuck Morgenstern, 610-216-4022
Secretary: Open
Newsletter Editor: Matt MacConnell

In Memoriam—LRSA Founder, Ted Miller

---

LRSA MEMBERSHIP FORM

I want to support the Lehigh River Stocking Association in their efforts to restore and stock the Lehigh River.

Is this a new or renewal membership?____

Name_________________________________________________________ Address_________________________________________________________

City__________________________ State________ Zip________ Phone_________________________

Email_________________________ Age___ Email me my newsletters. ___Yes____ No

___ Basic Membership --- $25. All Memberships include badge decals, ID card, and annual newsletter subscription

___ Silver Membership --- $45. You will receive a LRSA T-Shirt. Size: ___Sm ___Med ___Lrg ___XL ___XXL (___) Don’t send shirt

___ Gold Membership---$65. You will receive a LRSA Hat (___) don’t send hat

___ Husband and Wife Membership -- $45 or ___Family Membership -- $65: Husband, Wife and Children < 16

___ Platinum Membership --- $100. You will receive a LRSA Hat and T-Shirt or you will receive a Sweatshirt. Circle your preference in the line above and state your size___ Sm ___Med ___Lrg ___XL ___XXL (___)Don’t send merchandise

___ Life Time Membership --- $250. You will not need to renew each year and you will receive a Life-Member LRSA pin

___ Conservation Membership --- $70. You will receive a LRSA Hat and $20 will be allocated Conservation Program. (___) don’t send hat

___ Diamond Membership --- $500. Amount of Membership you would like to direct toward LRSA Conservation programs

Please remit to: Lehigh River Stocking Association | PO Box 97 | Lehighton | PA | 18235

Amount of Check Enclosed_________________________ You can also join or renew at: www.LRSA.org.

Check out our Facebook page or send us email at: Lehigh.River.Stocking.Association@gmail.com

Thank you for supporting the Lehigh River trout fishery