

Gone Fishing

Brian Bennewitz

For years my family has traveled to Minocqua, WI to enjoy rural living at our cabin. The cabin overlooks Mercer Lake, home to fish, raccoons, and bald eagles. The area offers many natural activities; I most enjoyed fishing. I fished frequently from a pier, for bluegill, sunfish, and perch.

One morning before I began fishing, I noticed an eagle perched in a nearby tree. After quietly observing the bird I baited my hook and cast the line out. I caught so many fish that one died in the bucket, so I tossed it into the lake. Within seconds the eagle swooped down and seized the fish with its talons. The eagle was so fast that it soon flew beyond my sight.

I saw the eagle again the next day; soon after I began fishing. Given yesterday's surprise, I planned on catching more fish so one would die faster. Soon after the bucket was full, a fish had died. Again, I tossed a dead fish into the water and watched the eagle seize it and return to the tree. When it had consumed the fish, I immediately tossed another fish into the lake and quietly waited for the eagle to dive. But it didn't.

The eagle's diving was amazing and I wanted to see it again. So on the third morning I took my time fishing. When no fish in the bucket died, I killed one, and threw it off the pier. Quickly, the eagle dove, seized the fish, and returned to the tree.

On the fourth day, I killed the first fish I caught and tossed it just a very short distance. The eagle glided near the fish but did not grab it until the third pass.

On the last day I planned to catch and kill a large fish, giving the bird one last meal. I slept in and reached the pier later than usual. When I arrived at the pier I stopped abruptly. The eagle was perched on the pier!

I slowly approached the bird. When I was ten feet away it screeched, extended its gigantic wings, and flew across the lake. When it disappeared I began fishing. I caught and killed a large perch, and quickly threw it into the lake. I heard the familiar screech and saw the eagle swoop. It had been watching me from a different tree.

I will never forget that week. I interacted with an amazing animal. Our behaviors were intertwined. The fish I threw into the lake reinforced the bird's diving and its diving reinforced my fishing and throwing fish into the lake.