

FOURTH PLACE (tie)—SENIOR ESSAY

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Age 18

THE EAGLE

Rod. Reel. Tackle and bait. Spring fishing trips in the Sportsman's Paradise. On a Saturday morning just before Easter a couple of years ago, my dad and I went on a fishing trip to Old River. Even though I do not like waking up before dawn and loading everything up and in the boat, I jumped at the chance for a father-daughter day!

By the time we got to the landing and put the boat in the water, the sun was rising, and I knew it would be a great fishing trip. We took the short boat ride to our first fishing hole of the morning, and daddy caught a few sac-a-lait. I don't usually put a line in the water, and that day was no exception. With a few novels in the boat to keep me occupied, I was happy to help if needed and to soak up some sun. My dad pulled in quite a few sac-a-lait that morning before we called it a day and headed home, but not before showing me a beautiful bald eagle perched high in its nest on a cypress tree.

It was the closest I've ever been to a bald eagle, and gave me a lot to reflect on on the way back home. Whether we happen to be a human or an eagle, we all just want to enjoy God's bounty on Earth -- land or water. I've been back under that nest a few times since that Saturday, and each time I notice the changes.

On a recent trip to Old River, we noticed the eagle has enlarged the nest and had baby eagles. Watching the eagle's nest grow and change with every passing spring and summer spent fishing has taught me that we have so much to learn from our surroundings -- things that cannot be taught from any textbook.