

February 15, 2020

Dear Class of 1955,

I learned about this course (*Wolves and Northwoods Carnivores at Audubon Center of the North Woods in Minnesota*) my freshman year (last year) and I was really excited about it, but the reason I did not take it was due to having a full class schedule. I applied to this course because I have a passion for animals as well as the outdoors. I grew up going camping, backpacking, hiking, and many more wilderness adventures. This course is also located close to an area I know very well. My family owns five cabins on Pike Lake in Grand Marais with two ponds in the back. For years I have spent two weeks in August going to Grand Marais to visit my great aunt and uncle. We would go fishing on the lake, canoeing, biking, picking raspberries, and walking to the ponds. Visiting Minnesota in the winter is very different than visiting in the summer. Once I applied to this course and got accepted, I couldn't wait to get to Minnesota to learn about wolves and tracking animals. When it came time to get on the plane, the trip felt unreal. I arrived at Osprey Wilds and knew I was going to have a great time in this course. Coming into this course knowing a couple people made the process of talking to other people easier.

The very first thing we did that caught my attention was visiting Peggy and her dog, Bear, at the Wildlife Science Center. This experience was amazing. We got to observe about 100 wolves in many different packs. Each pack were different kinds of wolves. As I observed them, I noticed how different the packs acted towards Peggy and Bear, as well as the other wolves in their pack. Some wolves were very aggressive towards Bear when they saw him while others did not mind. Now, we were told how Bear is a German Shepherd Pyreneese mix bred for herding, so he was just doing his job. Peggy explained to us the body language and sounds the wolves made and what they meant. As I listened to her and observed the wolves, I already understood the wolves' behavior before Peggy explained it. One fact that caught my attention was differentiating between an aggressive tail wag versus a playful tail wag. The way I figured it out was watching the wolf focus on Bear the entire time which told me all that

wolf wanted to do was to attack Bear. I found this interesting because even though Bear did bark and growl at the wolves occasionally, he really did not mind them since he went to work with Peggy every day and knew the routine. I enjoyed observing the wolves and figuring out their body language and behavior towards one another as well as towards all the people watching them. Some of the wolves were hand raised, while others were wild. Even the wolves who were hand raised did not always stay loyal to the humans who raised them. Peggy told us about internship opportunities which sounded amazing and something I am definitely interested in participating in.

Another impact from this course was when we went to Sigurd Olsen's house, Shack, and cabin at The Listening Point. The thing about Sigurd Olsen which inspired me the most was how he had a little shack called 'The Shack' far enough away from the house to where he did not have to listen to the phone ring, but his family could walk right over if they needed anything. This gave him an area where he could focus on writing his books with no distractions. When we saw The Shack, Bryan told us the story of his death. I found this story very interesting. He told us how one day Sigurd and his wife, Elizabeth, went snowshoeing, but then Elizabeth wanted to turn around, so she did. Meanwhile, Sigurd continued until his wife was wondering where he was, so she went out to find him. She came across his body face down in the snow where he had a heart attack and died right there. When she went back to The Shack, she found a note in the typewriter Sigurd left for her. It read; "There's a new adventure coming up and I am sure it will be a good one." Written on January 13, 1982. This story was very sad but sweet, because he knew something was going to happen, so he prepared himself. Since then, the house and property of Sigurd Olsen has been maintained and is now on the National Register of Historical Places, and is dedicated to furthering Sig's legacy of wilderness education. We went to The Listening Point where he had a cabin kept 100 yards away from the road so it would not be disturbed. The Listening Point was created in 1986 by Sigurd Olsen on Burntside Lake near Ely, MN. We walked along the lake a bit and saw some really clear wolf prints which were cool to see. We were also able to

see the inside of his cabin. I was impressed with how well it has been maintained over the years.

One more impact this course had on me was visiting the Wintergreen Dogsled Lodge. We were able to pet 20-30 sled dogs which was a lot of fun. All these dogs were Inuit sled dogs from Greenland, also called Canadian Eskimo dogs. I was able to pet every single dog. I found it very interesting how different their personalities were. Some dogs hid in their home while others were very barky and active. The first time I went around petting the dogs, a lot of them jumped up on me and licked my face, which I enjoyed very much. Now, technically I am allergic to dander, although I could not pass up the opportunity of petting a bunch of sled dogs. Then the owner, Paul, talked to us about what they do there and how they have internships available which sounded like a great opportunity. He told us to walk a certain direction on the way back to our vans so we could see three groups of dogs pulling sleds returning from their journey. It was really cool to see the sled dogs in action, doing what they love, and they looked very happy.

One final learning impact this trip had on me was going to the International Wolf Center. I was very interested in watching the four wolves in the exhibit and figuring out their hierarchy. The wolf I observed more than others was Axel. I got a great picture of Axel looking straight at me right on the other side of the glass. He and his brother Grayson were rescued because their parents were killed by poachers. They are about three and a half years old. They are arctic wolves and they were brought to the International Wolf Center when they were two years old. They were raised around people so it would be easier on them seeing all the people watching them through the windows. They were introduced to the pack from May to August starting off through a fence, then face to face. The other wolves in the exhibit are Denali, Boltz, and Grizzer. We did not see Grizzer in the exhibit because he is 15 and a half years old and retired. Grizzer is the oldest wolf they have ever had at the center. Boltz is a Great Plains wolf

who is seven and a half years old and he is bossed around by all the other wolves. Denali is 11 years old and he is the oldest in the exhibit. They retire wolves around 10 years old. All these wolves are different colors, and something interesting I learned about wolf fur is how it gets lighter as the wolf gets older. I really enjoyed learning about these wolves.

This course helped me realize that ever since I can remember, I have had an ability to really understand animals. When I say that, I'm talking about having years of watching my animals paying close attention to their every move. Eventually I could understand what every sound, body position, gesture, and facial expression meant. I grew up with dogs, cats, goats, chickens, cockatiels, and a goose. Being around so many animals has made me very observant of people as well. This has also helped me observe and understand people, noticing their body position, facial expressions, and being able to figure out how they could possibly be feeling. I think this is a very good quality to have because it enables one to understand how others and animals feel by putting yourself in their shoes. I love animals, and I think working with wolves as a future career would be amazing. This course taught me how observant I am when it comes to animals, and how to look at tracks and figure out what kind of animal it could be by measuring the stride, straddle, and length and width of the prints, (front and hind). This course was perfect for me, because I learn best when I can work hands on with what I am learning about, which is exactly what we did throughout this course. I think with all the experience I have with animals and everything I have learned in this class about observation, there are so many great opportunities up here working with wolves, and I would like to follow through with this path. The most interesting internship opportunities that spoke to me were the Wildlife Science Center internship and the Wintergreen Dogsled Lodge internship. I think either internships would be amazing and I am very interested in learning more about them. I would like to give a big thanks to all donors. I would not be able to have such great opportunities without the help of the scholarships.

I really appreciate being able to participate in this course and learning so much more about animals, as well as myself.

Many thanks,

Alina Moore '22

*Wolves and Northwoods Carnivores at Audubon Center of the North Woods in Minnesota*



Bobcat print

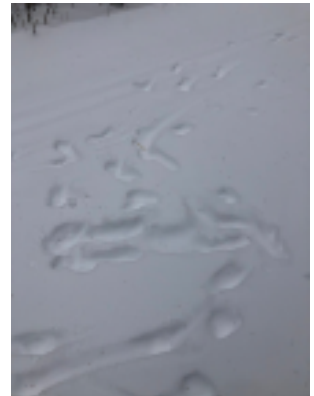


Bob, the sled dog





Wildlife Science Center



Wolf prints

Wolf print laying down

Axel