

International Natural Resources

By: Amanda Heltzel

Throughout the month of July, I had the opportunity to travel across northern Sweden with Purdue Forestry and Natural Resources on their study abroad program which focused on natural resources issues. As a part of this course, I got to collaborate and build friendships with students from North Carolina State University and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU).



The course began in Umeå where we spent our week taking classes at SLU, learning about the similarities and differences in Swedish and American natural resource management. We bonded over a 4th of July barbeque and a traditional Swedish dinner that featured pickled herring, moose, and Västerbotten cheese. During this week we heard from many different SLU faculty on topics ranging from the new Vindel River Biosphere Reserve to reindeer husbandry.

At the beginning of our second week we traveled away from the coast and along the Vindel River to the town of Vindeln. Here, we learned about river restoration projects, Swedish forest management, and climate change research. At the end of the week I went on my first white water rafting excursion with the group where we conquered class 4 rapids on the Vindel River and enjoyed Swedish fika with our rafting guides afterwards.

Week three was spent in Sorsele. It was during this week that I formed a true friendship with one of my Swedish classmates that I shared a cabin with while we were camping. We would spend our afternoons after class walking around the small town, discussing our cultural backgrounds, and taking turns cooking dinner for our group of friends, our study abroad family.



Our final week took place in Ammarnäs, a small village located in the foothills of the Scandinavian mountains. We spent the week hiking and covered about 23 miles, all while learning about the natural world surrounding us and challenging our minds to see it in a different perspective. The

highlight of our entire study abroad was at the end of the week when we hiked along the Kungsleden from Ammarnäs up to the Aigert camp to stay overnight.

I am truly grateful for this study abroad course where I had the opportunity to expand my mind by experiencing a new culture and being challenged to see natural resources management in a new light. I know that I will carry this experience in my heart and in my mind for the rest of my life and that I will continue to apply all the lessons I have learned from this trip. I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the scholarships that made this trip possible for me,

particularly the Walter Pugsley Scholarship. I hope to one day revisit Sweden and to continue my travels to other parts of the world in order to further my knowledge of other cultures and peoples.

