When we weren’t volunteering around the park, we learning about native wildlife inside of the nature center. It contained a zoo like arrangement of snakes and injured wildlife, including a Beaver, several foxes, a coyote, an eagle and an owl. The park’s surrounding greenery allowed us to see deer throughout our stay and were guided to a location to view hawks and eagles hunting, moreover we also shown the enormous eagle nests.

The park was beautiful, but the staff made the trip great. Our guide, Amy, along with her trainee Hunter, were the ones to point out the location of the eagle nests. They also showed us how to feed the animals at the nature center, while explaining the backstory of each; for example, the eagle lost one of his wings in a power line (a powerful, direct example of the damages wrought by human endeavors). Amy also taught us how to use wood burning tools allowing us to create tokens of our stay and leave behind an emblazed wooden banner for future groups to see.

My personal favorite visit, with two long time campers around the warmth of a fire, was with a grizzled, bear of a grandpa, Cliff and his wife, camp cook, Wendy. They were the sweetest and so was their cherry cobbler. They taught us to cook the cherries and cake batter in their Dutch oven, expectedly, over the coals of the fire we made. Surprisingly they added an extra flair, shoveling coals on top of the cast iron container to sizzle the top and edges of the delicious concoction we would later devour.

My biggest surprise was the sheer character each team member had. Alexandra’s chipper, cheerful attitude, to Andrews comedic posturing created a diverse group that made the trip enjoyable and productive. Our leaders, Zarifa, with lipstick loud enough to match her attitude and bustily work ethic, along with Vivian, watched from the shadows, binder (Brick!) in one hand and hammer in the other, ensured that the events ran smoothly. I could enumerate the unique attributes and contributions of every person on our team, but I will only note the two I felt were most distinct from the high standards of hard work, impeccable cooking, and comradery. Vivian’s leadership style relied on observation and she performed this with excellence. Out of all the leaders and individuals, on this trips and other I’ve attended, that I have heard speak during reflections, I’ve not seen another look so carefully at the actions of others. Every day we gave kudos to each other and she always named, the most important and empathetic actions that the rest of us seemed to miss.

I cherished my time at ASB and look forward to ones in the future.