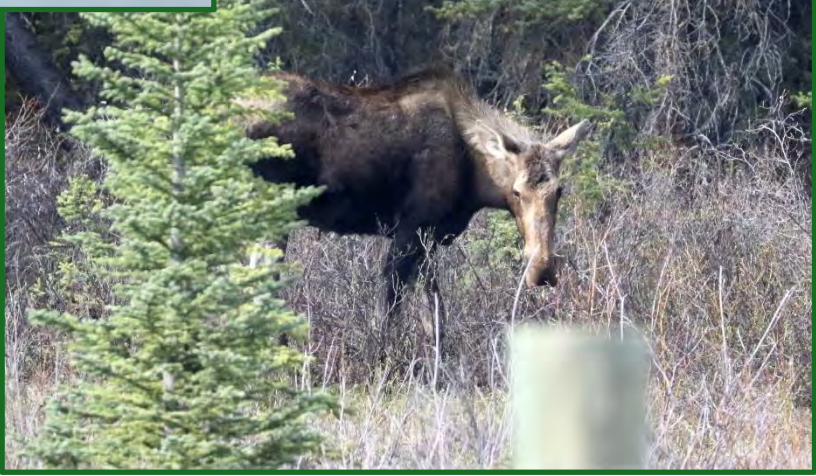
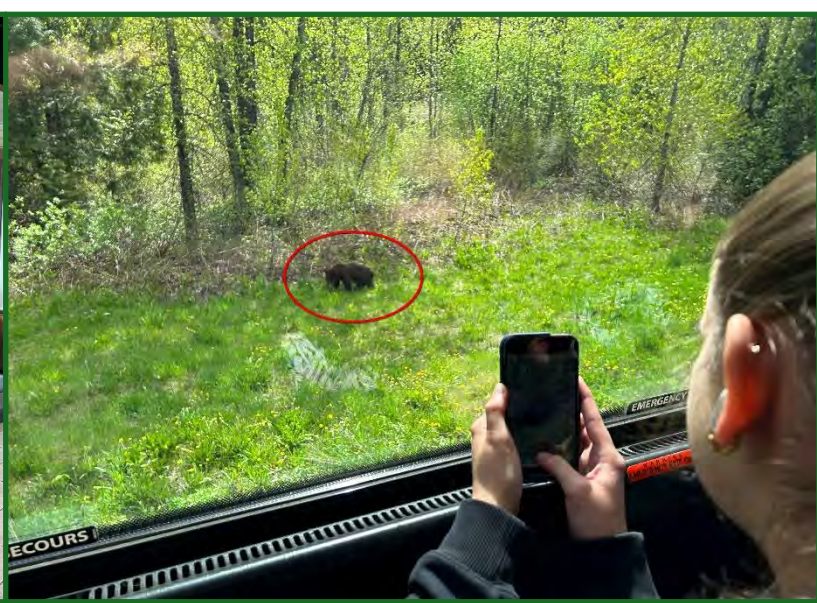




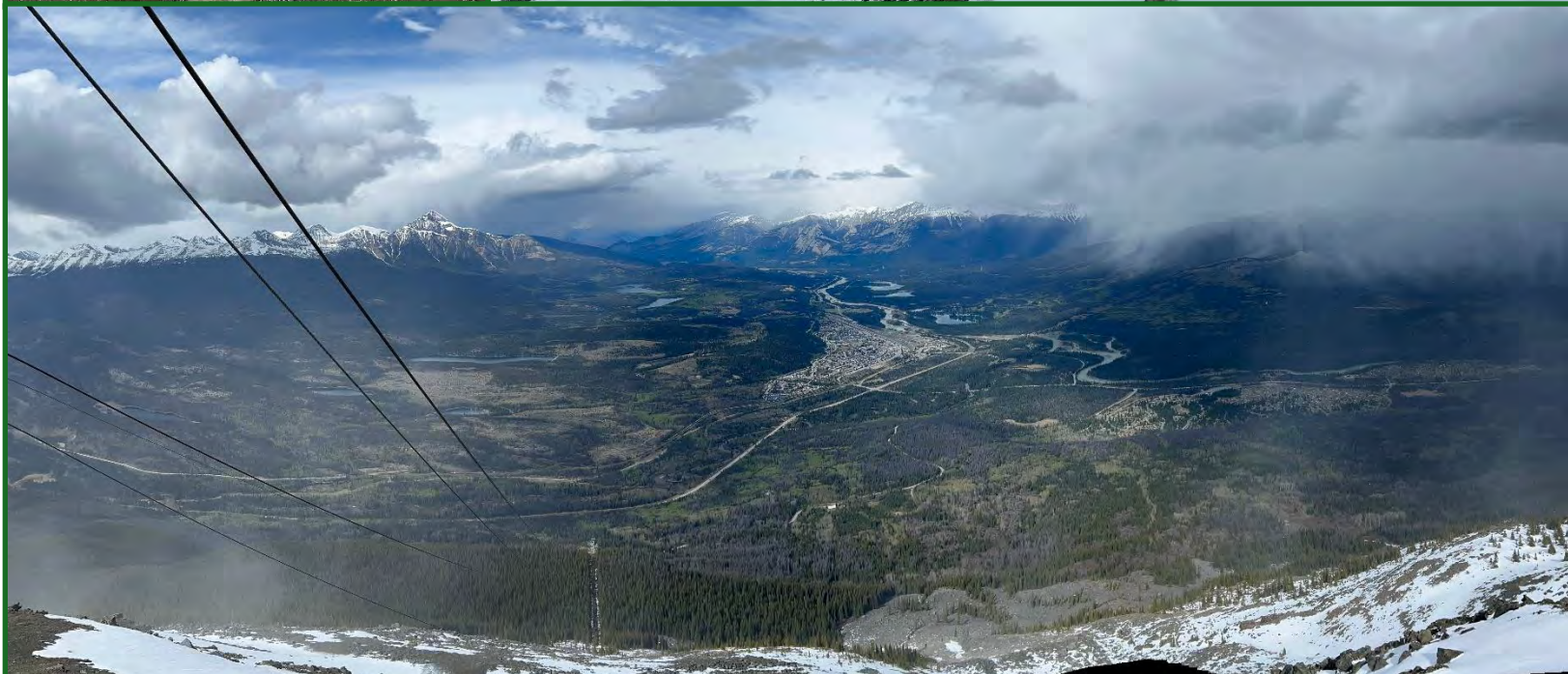
**Jasper and Banff Trip May 17-20, 2024
SD73 International Student Program**



Twenty students and 4 chaperones left Kamloops, BC at 7:00am Friday morning May 17, 2024. We headed north up the Yellowhead Highway, stopping at a Tim Hortons in Clearwater before stopping for lunch in Valemount. We stopped for a mother Black Bear and her 2 cubs between Clearwater and Blue River and again for another roadside Black Bear an hour later. We pulled up to the Mt. Robson viewing area at 12:15pm but the peak was hidden by a very persistent cloud. At roughly 4000m, Mt. Robson is the highest point in the Canadian Rockies. We continued east, crossing into Alberta, and pulled up to the Jasper Skytram at 2:40pm Alberta time.



It started snowing as we rode up the Jasper Skytram. At high elevation, the weather changes quickly and we experienced many different types of weather in our 2 hours at the top. Most of the group hiked up higher than the gift shop and viewing area at the top. We were met with fierce wind and snow for part of the time. The severe wind caused the sky tram to stop running for an hour or so and, as a result, we were late descending by 30 minutes. We then drove the short distance to our hostel, checked in, and had roughly 2 hours to eat and explore before our first dusk wildlife drive.



We left the hostel at 8:00pm and drove up Maligne Lake Road to Medicine Lake and back on our first wildlife drive. We added to our Black Bear total on this drive as well as saw our first Elk and White-tailed Deer. There was a Bald Eagle nest near Medicine Lake with a young one sticking its head up for a digiscoped image.



Clockwise from top left: Black Bear, Mule Deer, digi-scoping the Bald Eagle nest, looking at something beside the road, photographing a bull Elk, Bald Eagle Eaglet. We arrived back at the hostel at 10:00pm and had a campfire for roasting marshmallows and making smores. We were quite thankful that the predicted rain never really materialized.



The next morning we left the hostel at 6:15am and drove east towards Miette for our dawn wildlife drive. This one hour and forty five minute drive resulted in some good looks at Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, Mountain Goats, a pair of Coyotes, as well as more Elk, and both Mule and White-tailed Deer.



At 9:00, we left on the bus for our float tour on the Athabasca River. This 1.5 hour float takes you through some amazing scenery. We were greeted by some more Bighorn Sheep at the place we exited the river.



We then had some time for tourist shopping in Jasper, relaxing, buying groceries, etc... for most of the afternoon. It was quite cold and rain was in the forecast in Jasper so we voted to cancel the planned hike. We all met at the campfire pit at 5:00pm and roasted hot dogs together for supper.



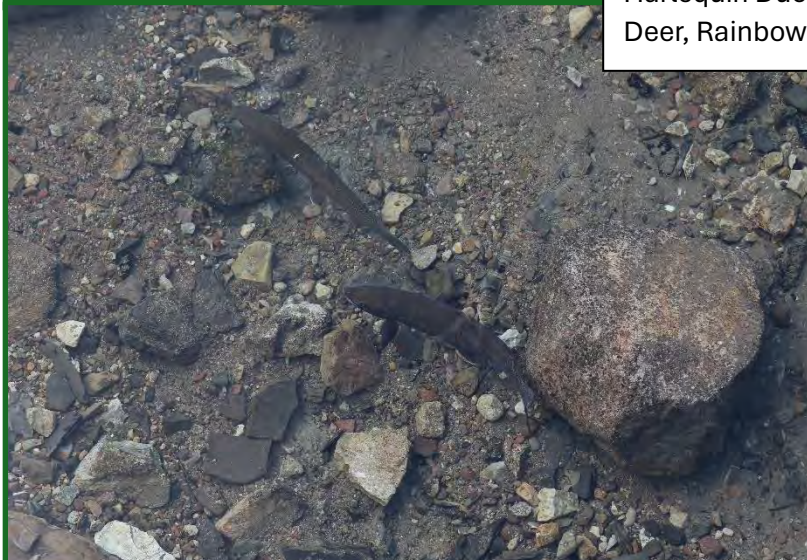
At 7:30pm, we left for a wildlife drive back in BC to Moose Lake and back to Jasper. This drive produces another Black Bear, another Elk, but not much else. Once back in Jasper, we decided to try one more short road and ended up seeing the only Grizzly Bear found on the trip. The Grizzly was crossing the road and we were at the right place at the right time. We followed this up with another campfire to make more smores.



The next morning we did another wildlife drive from 7-9am and this time made it all the way to Maligne Lake and back. At the Maligne Lake outlet, we saw Rainbow Trout spawning from a bridge and also viewed some Harlequin Ducks in the faster current. We didn't see much else other than more elk and deer.



Clockwise from top left: Elk, Harlequin Ducks, White-tailed Deer, Rainbow Trout.



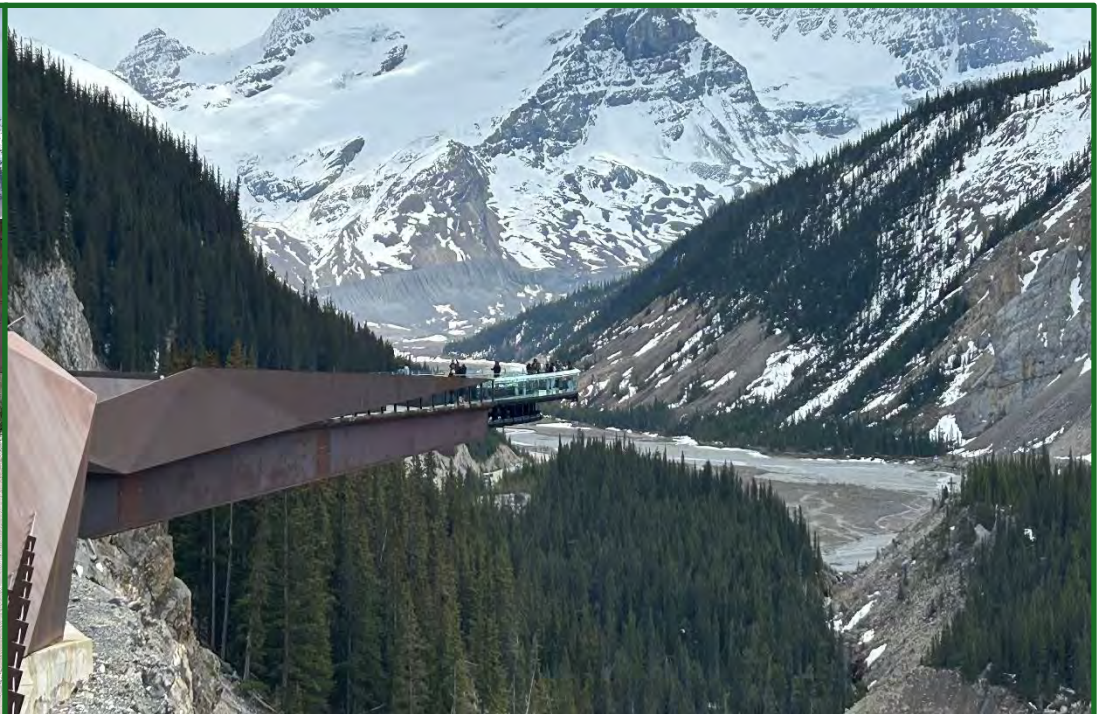
We had roughly 1 hour for breakfast and checking out and then left Jasper at 10:00. We had 12 noon reservations at the Columbia Icefields. The drive from Jasper to Banff is one of the most scenic drives in the world and we took in the scenery along the way. Several more Black Bears, Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, and other wildlife was seen along this route.



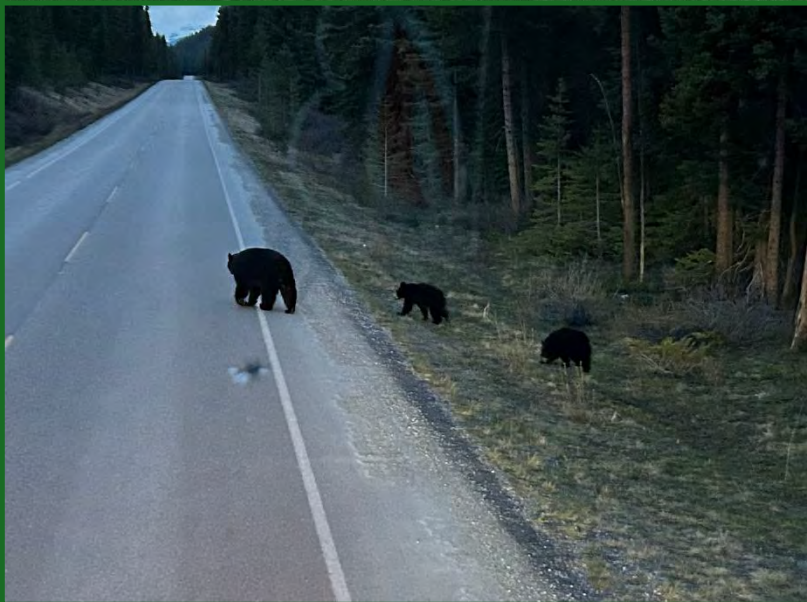
At the icefields, we did two tours: the Icefield Adventure and Skywalk.







The tours were finished by 2:30 and we stayed in the area until 3:30 to have lunch. Next, we drove down to Lake Louise and checked into our hostel there. We enjoyed the scenery again and spotted many Mountain Goats on the cliffs along this portion of the road. We had roughly 45 minutes to get settled before boarding the bus and driving to Banff. We saw two Moose along the highway on this leg of our journey and then one more in the Vermillion Lakes area. At Banff we had time for exploring the area and having dinner. We loaded back onto the bus at 9:00pm and drove back to Lake Louise, taking the Bow Valley Parkway for part of the way. Along this stretch, a sow Black Bear and her two cubs entertained us for a bit.





On our last morning, we left our hostel at 9:30 and drove the short ways to Lake Louise. We enjoyed this very popular tourist spot with many other people. Unfortunately the lake was still mostly frozen but the remarkable scenery was still there.



We stayed at lake Louise for an hour and then turned west towards Kamloops. We stopped in Revelstoke for lunch and had a short washroom break in Sicamous and arrived back in Kamloops at 5:00pm.



Mammal List:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Black Bear – 13 | 8. Mountain Goat – 21 |
| 2. Grizzly bear – 1 | 9. Coyote – 3 |
| 3. Mule Deer – 19 | 10. Hoary Marmot – 1 |
| 4. White-tailed Deer – 13 | 11. Red Squirrel – 3 |
| 5. Moose – 3 | 12. Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel – 3 |
| 6. Elk – 33 | 13. Columbian Ground Squirrel – 5 |
| 7. Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep – 26 | 14. Snowshoe Hare – 1 |

Students On This Trip Were From:

Italy, Chile, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Mexico, Spain, and Brazil

Favourite Moment

Alice – Visiting the town of Jasper because you can see the mountains and I was able to visit with my friends.

Julian – The float tour because it was really good weather.

Lorenz – Drinking and putting my face into the glacier water because I've never tried water from a glacier before.

Finn – Being on top of the Jasper Sky Tram because of the stupendous view.

Rebecca – the hike at the top of the sky tram because the view was beautiful.

Stefania – Lake Louise, even if it was frozen, because I've only seen it on my phone before.

Giulio – Lake Louise because I always wished to go there.

Henrique – Every moment was my favourite because I'm not sure when I will be in Canada again.

Bernardo – Being on top of the mountain with the wind blowing in my face.

Mattia – The float tour because it was neat to use the river to see Jasper National Park.

Aline – The Saturday night fire because it was really fun to do both hot dogs and smores with my friends.

Rocio – When I saw the family of bears because it was one of my goals in my exchange year.

Sara – The last night with my friends, we were laughing so hard.

Juni – Seeing the scenery on all of the drives.

Chiara – When we went to the glacier because it was amazing to see everything there. I've never seen one before.

Lucia – Being at the glacier because the scenery was really cool. I also liked the campfires at night.

Mailys – When we saw the baby bears because it was unexpected and its not something you see every day and it was cute.

Zazie – I loved the wildlife drives, especially when we saw Mountain Goats for the first time.

Auriane – When we saw the bear cubs and Moose.

Sasha – When we saw the moose because they are harder to see and it is an animals I had not seen yet.

One Thing I Learned on the Trip:

Alice – That Elk and Moose are different animals.

Julian – There are only 23 Ice Explorers (buses that go on the glacier) in the world.

Lorenz – Bears are not as scary and big as they are in the movies.

Finn – That baby Moose get kicked out by their mom around 2 years old.

Rebecca – That there are bridges for animals to cross busy highways.

Stefania – how much people love and respect nature here in Canada.

Giulio – That there are bridges for animals so that they can cross the roads.

Henrique – Bears hibernate during the winter and their babies are called cubs.

Bernardo – The weather in Canada can be really cold, even in May.

Mattia – The way that the Alberta government protects the wildlife in the parks. The bridges for the animals.

Aline – When you are making smores, don't let the marshmallows get too close to your hair. The result is painful.

Rocio – How Banff can take care of its wildlife by using fences and bridges.

Sara – That the Athabasca Glacier could melt in the 30 to 50 years.

Juni – There are free refills at McDonalds. #lifehack

Chiara – You can never stop learning new things. I could never imagine landscapes like that.

Lucia – Animal crossings in Banff save a lot of animal lives.

Mailys – That Grizzly Bears sometimes eat Black Bears.

Zazie – Bear cubs are born during hibernation.

Auriane – About the animal bridges and how the animals can pass safely.

Sasha – Male and female Bighorn sheep do not usually stay together.