This summer, I interned at a place where the sun never sets and beauty

never ends; a place where moose roam along the roadsides and snowcapped

mountains are hidden between the clouds. I was lucky enough to

intern as at the Alaska Sea-life Center (ASLC); a place dedicated to

research, rescue and imparting knowledge of Alaskan marine ecology.

With a pair of rain boots and a fleece jacket for those “not-quite 70

degree days”, I set out for an unforgettable summer in the small town of

Seward.

As a veterinary lab intern, I was responsible for much of the

preliminary lab work for my department. Some days involved blood

chemistry, serum separation, and even biopsies. Others involved CBC

(Complete Blood Counts), fecal floats and making blood slides (a newly

acquired specialty of mine). The lab skills I learned from working with

these animals strengthened my understanding of lab results and what

they represent. Applying knowledge I learned in nursing classes to these

understudied species was the highlight of my lab experience.

On the days that I didn’t play with the lab equipment, I often shadowed the

veterinarians at work. I observed sea bird surgeries; assisted in blood

collection during exams; monitored anesthesia of seal lions; and even

performed necropsy on collected beluga whale specimens. I also did my

fair share of animal husbandry working closely with 13 orphaned

harbor seal pups and spent parts of my days feeding, cleaning, and

restraining them for examinations.

That does not however, mean that the rest of my time in Alaska wasn’t

exhilarating. After long days of making perfect blood slides, I went whale

watching, zip lining, ice climbing, hiking and biking through lush greenery,

dense moss-cover forest and reinvigorating glaciers Alaska offered.

~MJ Sun, Gustavus Adolphus College 15’