

IT'S ALL CONNECTED

Inspiring ↔ Informative ↔ Actionable

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What's One Rock or an Empty Shell?

The principles of [Leave No Trace](#) are a proven way to conduct yourself outdoors and we urge you to consider following them. Or put a simpler way, take only pictures and leave only footprints. But this is something much bigger. Is it really OK to [remove a small token](#) from nature?

Take, for example, collecting seashells. Empty shells serve as vital elements on the seashore and should be left in place

because they:

- Provide shelter to other creatures even after the original inhabitant is gone
- Help slow erosion on the shore
- Serve as a substrate for kelp and algae to attach
- The calcium carbonate that composes the shell decomposes and returns to the ocean for other organisms to reabsorb for building their own shells (very important now that ocean acidification is becoming widespread)
- Sea anemones attach small shells and fragments to themselves for protection
- The shoreline aesthetic is prettier for others to behold when there are shells present
- Collected shells end up forgotten in a drawer or tossed into the trash
- Gathering items on the beach (or elsewhere) may be illegal

A friend of Jumpstart Nature, [Andrea Joy Adams](#), talks about the collecting of stones in a much more poetic and engaging way in her article, [I-Me-Mine: Why I Don't \(usually\) Collect Stones](#), inspired from a trip to Ireland and the beautiful isle of Iona, in particular. In her words, "Some may say, *What's one stone? It's less (if at all) about the individual stone*

and more about the intention behind the taking. The guilt I feel when pocketing an object reminds me to be present and love the beauty of the stones where they are, then experience the subtle or not-so-subtle grief of leaving them behind.

The urge to take a piece of Iona home stemmed from not wanting to have to come to terms with the fact that I would be leaving soon and may never return. By taking it, I was sidestepping a very important grief process (or so I thought).



Once the talismans we've gathered from our journeys make their way home with us, how often do they keep their magic? I can't tell you how many times I've tossed yet another set of stones in the backyard, releasing them back to the earth—if in the wrong spot—because, after they were tucked into a drawer for some indeterminate amount of time, I couldn't remember where I got them. Through the mists of time, they had become worthless. Even if the novelty convinces me I will cherish this item forever, it soon fades, buried under the sands of the rest of the responsibilities and attention demands that compose the daily workings of my life.”

In addition to the idea that it's just not a good practice to collect things in nature, Ms. Adams helps the reader see the value of being present at the moment and savoring the beauty as it is meant to be. Click the link above to read her full article and then peruse some of her [other work](#) for even more enlightenment and Hopecology.



Shout Out To The Trail Crews

Winter weather can wreak havoc on our hiking trails. Did you know that most trail maintenance and restoration is done by volunteers for our various public lands? The truth is that our land managers do not have enough funding and they rely on a cadre of volunteers to keep things open. **Let's give a hearty thank you to all trail crew volunteers!**

During these rainier days, one of the most common questions at a park visitor center is, “are the trails open?” Often, the answer is yes, simply because there isn't enough staff to keep people off the trails. Parking lot gates are often closed, but that mostly has to do with the state of the dirt lot. Having said that, one can easily imagine that if the lots are in bad shape, the trails may be too.

Please consider and heed the sage advice from the folks at [Tree People](#): “storms bring about the risk of floods, mudslides, and other destruction - and this year is no exception. Our trails remain open, but we ask that you use caution while hiking and remain on designated trails only. Additionally, horses and mountain bikes can cause a tremendous amount of damage while soils remain saturated, so please keep your trail time to hiking only until things dry out.”

Quick Connections

Books, websites, documentaries, podcasts, events, quotes, and more



Nature's Survival Skills

From the National Wildlife Federation, we suggest this short article about the myriad [ways animals survive](#) the harsh realities of winter.



Neighborhood markets are great places to shop and grab a quick bite, but it may be tough to find plant based food choices. Check out this [short video from Project Drawdown about](#) making plant based food more accessible in New York City bodegas.



Quote we're pondering

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." - **John Muir**



To Feed or Not to Feed

Audubon Society helps us understand the [best practices of feeding birds](#), or not, as the case may be.

Community Connections

We want to connect with you. What would you like to hear about in future newsletters?

We read each and every response and will share selected reader stories in upcoming newsletters.

Your feedback is important. [Tell us](#) how we are doing and what you would like to see covered in future newsletters.

Every connection counts! Please help grow our community of everyday heroes by sharing this newsletter with a friend or colleague.

Thank you,

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