

### **Lobster Curriculum in Schools: Proper Shoreline Etiquette**

We've all heard the slogan: "Take nothing but pictures. Leave nothing but footprints." However, that is not enough! Proper shoreline etiquette requires more savvy than most people think. Being aware of the way intertidal species live can help us to better protect the beauty and nature of our coast.

Whether you are visiting a sandy beach, mudflat, salt marsh or rocky shore, you are entering a fascinating world where a myriad of creatures live and die. With proper care, you can make sure that you are not the cause of their demise.

The Gulf of Maine is dominated by the type of shoreline hosting the richest diversity of sea life: the rocky intertidal zone. Making a living above and below and firmly attached to rocky substrate, species in the rocky intertidal zone compete fiercely and struggle to hold on to their home sites.

Living things that cling to the surface of the rocks include marine algal species (seaweed), mussels, barnacles, snails, encrusting invertebrates, among others. The algae depend on sunlight for photosynthesis. The animals depend on seawater flowing over their bodies to capture their planktonic prey.

Underneath the rocks, fish, shrimp, crabs, lobsters, worms and others depend on the protection of their home as a hiding place to avoid predators and to seek shelter from ultraviolet radiation, rain, ice, snow and wave action.

If curiosity leads you to disturb the environment, please, please, put the living things and their homes back the way you found them – and do it with great care. For example, if you flip over a rock to see who may be living underneath, be gentle with the creatures you find there. When you are finished examining the occupants, put the rock back in the way you found it and do not crush any of the living things underneath. Avoid stepping on loose rocks. Don't pick up a rock that is too heavy for you to hold. You will be too likely to let it fall harshly and you won't have proper control over arranging it in its original orientation. If there are delicate animals living beneath that may be crushed by the rock, then put the rock back first and encourage the critters to go back underneath the rock.

If you follow these simple guidelines, the life on the surface and the life underneath the rocks can continue to live, grow, feed, and enjoy safety.