

ELF NOTES

Environmental Learning for the Future - Vermont Institute of Natural Science
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STONEWALLS

STORY MAP

An old stonewall has a lot of stories to tell. You can uncover the stories by mapping details of the wall and the things that live on and around it.

Make regular visits to the wall for a while to get all the details. Some handy tools for collecting information and making a story map would be; drawing paper and colored pencils; magnifier; tape measure; compass; and rock, tree, plant and animal id guides. Draw your stonewall, noting the size of the stones and the height of the wall. Small stones tell that the fields nearby were plowed for crops. Taller walls and walls with barbed wire along the top were built to keep livestock in or out of the fields. Low walls were built as boundaries. Next, add the lichen, moss, and other plants to your story map. The kinds of plants and their age or size can help you tell how long the wall has been there. Each time you visit, add the new things you find to your map!

Old New England stonewalls offer a look into the history of a landscape and provide varied and changing habitat for many plants and animals.

People who cleared the land of original forest and removed the stones from plowed fields built many of the old walls found in the woods. The walls were built as fences to keep in livestock or mark boundaries. Stonewalls remain as a reminder of past land use.

Stonewalls, as part of the landscape, change over time from piles of bare stones to places full of life. Lichens and mosses growing on the surfaces of rocks found in old stonewalls contribute to the process of breaking down rock into soil, providing a place for other plants to grow and varied habitat for animals. Left undisturbed by human activity, the types of plants and animals that inhabit a stonewall will change over time with the progression of ecological succession.

ELF NEWS FROM SCHOOL

