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**STONEWALLS – Habitats – SLIDE SHOW SCRIPT (Grades 3-6)**

1. STONEWALL AND FIELD

New England's stonewalls tell many stories. They remind us of a time when most of our countryside was cleared of trees to create crop fields, pastures, or ...

2. STONEWALL IN YOUNG FOREST

... hayfields. Farmers built stonewalls to keep cows, sheep, and pigs in their pastures and out of crop fields, where they could destroy the year's harvest. Many old farms were abandoned long ago, allowing openings to grow back to forest.

3. FLAT ROCKS

The rocks themselves have stories, too. Flat ones such as these probably came from broken ledges and bedrock and can be stacked quite easily.

4. ROUND ROCKS

Round rocks are harder to stack and balance. Where did these rocks come from? Most were pulled from the ground as farmers cleared the land for crops. They were carried here from the north by glaciers, which tumbled and ground them over the land, rounding off their rough edges.

5. ROCKS AND ICE

Stonewalls, like everything else in nature, are always changing. If left undisturbed, these rocks will very slowly turn into soil. Ice and snow work their way into cracks, breaking the rock apart.

6. CRUSTY LICHENS ON ROCKS

Plants help break them down, too. Lichens, plants that combine a fungus and an alga, are the first plants to grow on bare rock. They produce acids that dissolve the rock and begin to build soil. Some are flat, crusty lichens that cling tightly to the rocks (*crustose lichens*).

7. LEAFY LICHENS

Other lichens stand out from the rock and look leafy (*foliose lichens*).

8. BRITISH SOLDIERS (BRANCHY LICHENS)

Still others are erect and branchy, like these British soldiers, named for their straight posture and "red coats" (*fruticose lichens*).

9. MOSESSES

Once lichens have built a tiny layer of soil, mosses can grow in spots with lots of sunlight and moisture.

10. MOSS CLOSE-UP

The mossy, green mat we see on some rocks and logs is made up of many small moss plants.

11. MOSS SPORE CAPSULES

Mosses have spores instead of seeds. Little capsules containing spores grow on stalks that rise out of the moss bed. Under the right conditions, each spore will grow into a new moss plant.

12. FERN ON ROCK

Lichens and mosses prepare the rock surface for other plants, like ferns, to take hold.

13. SPRUCE SEEDLING ON ROCK

Even seed-bearing plants, like this young evergreen tree, can grow on stonewalls once enough minerals, nutrients, and moisture are present. These plants continue the process of breaking down rock and building soil.

14. MAPLE TREE NEXT TO STONEWALL

Stonewalls also shelter plants in the ground around them. This maple tree germinated when the land next to the stonewall was a crop field. The plow missed it because it grew so close to the wall. A tree like this may serve as a lookout for a hawk or a home for a raccoon.

15. BEETLE

Stonewalls also serve as habitat for a great variety of animal life, such as beetles ...

16. DADDY LONGLEGS

... daddy longlegs ...

17. WOOLLY BEAR CATERPILLAR

... woolly bear caterpillars ...

18. SNAKE

... and snakes. You can often find their shed skins on and under the stones.

19. MOUSE

Rodents such as mice, chipmunks, and squirrels find cozy habitats within, under, and around stonewalls.

20. SQUIRREL

They often store nuts and seeds here, some of which sprout into plants that help create habitat for other creatures.

21. GROUSE TRACKS

Other animals leave signs of their passing, such as these tracks left by a ruffed grouse.

22. FOX

Can you think why a fox might visit a stonewall? (*Foxes eat small animals.*) What other predators might find a meal at a stonewall? (*weasels, fishers, bobcats, coyotes*)

23. STONEWALL

Built by past generations of farmers to separate crops from livestock, stonewalls provide a variety of habitats for many plants and animals. Today they are important resources in our natural landscape.