

What happened to teaching respect for the beach?

Surrey Now

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The Editor,

Upon arriving early in the morning at the west parking lot at West Beach in White Rock recently, a troop of students showed up with a teacher and several assistants. I noticed they were there for kayak lessons. "How wonderful," I thought. "What a great idea for these kids."

After the kayaking was done and they ate their lunches, they were turned loose on the beach. I was horrified. The adults sat on their butts while the kids stripped the beach in front of the boat launch, turning over hundreds of stones. One assistant made her way down to the incoming tide, as student brought her an empty beer bottle - she threw it into the surf!

My Lord, are we now in this day and age, teaching kids it's OK to rip apart the beach? Thirty-five years ago as a camp counsellor, when we took the kids the beach, we would turn over one rock, show the kids what was under there and explained what they were and why they shouldn't be disturbed. They were taught to leave anything they found - rocks, shells, etc.

I still can't believe what I saw, and am disgusted with the adults who let this happen.

Steve Eldridge,

Surrey

<http://www2.canada.com/surreynow/news/letters/story.html?id=507510a4-f599-470a-bcd8-4cd96190152a>

Re: letter by Steve Eldridge "What happened to teaching respect for the beach?"

The Editor,

Many inter-tidal creatures are killed when kids rampage on the beach as Steve Eldridge notes seeing recently on West Beach. I have been awed by the destruction too, at Crescent Beach, as the school year ends with mass field

trips. Last Tuesday there were at least three hundred kids there overturning rocks, chasing crabs and digging up clams. Only forty were with my group on a Beach Heroes guided walk where the first thing they learned is how to move rocks so creatures are not killed. Mr. Eldridge emphasized beach etiquette: don't disturb the rocks permanently and don't collect. 'But why not', people ask on the Beach Hero walks?

A rock is the roof of the home of tiny fish, shore crabs, periwinkles, and hundreds more smaller species. The house is usually full of water. These creatures dry out and die quickly when exposed up to the air and sun. The roof rock also needs to be put back water-side down in it's original position. For example, limpets travel, but not far. They often wear a groove in their rocky bedroom. Creatures are crushed and can't move if not replaced exactly.

And why can't we take the beautiful shell home?

The shell, rock, whatever is someone's house too! Even if we can't see barnacles, or anything moving, something lives there. Tiny and microscopic shrimp, eggs and larvae all cling to ocean debris. Rusty spots on rocks aren't rust; they are eggs masses, lichens and sponges. Crescent Beach used to be known for its carnelian red agates, a stone used in jewelry. Now very few agates are found because they were collected for decades.

Mr. Eldridge laments that parents and teachers don't teach conservation, but it's not their fault. They don't know a whole small-scale world lives down there on the beach rocks, in the sand, swimming amidst eelgrass. Much of it you can't see. And its under our feet; a place we don't look very often!

Beach Heroes free guided walks are available through July and August at both White Rock Pier and Beecher Place at Crescent Beach. **Groups of ten or more are welcome to book a private walk and groups of children get priority.** On dry land find the Beach Heroes at a booth at the White Rock Farmers Market on select dates. The schedule is online at www.birdsonthebay.ca.

Also, look for the knowledgeable and friendly Beach Heroes Interpreters Jody and Kayla in their bright orange shirts on the beach. Please consider walking gently on our neighbours on the shore.

Jessica Alford
Friends of Semiahmoo Bay volunteer