

# Let's ROCK!

There's a million-year-old mystery in that rock in your hand.

**FROM THE TALL CLIFFS** surrounding Devil's Lake to the rough pebbles in a gravel driveway, rocks can help us solve mysteries about the history of Wisconsin.

"Each rock is really telling us a story," says Dyanna Czeck, who is a professor at UW-Milwaukee in geology (rock science).

She likes to think of herself as a rock detective: "It's a little bit of history, a little bit of mystery."

You can be a rock detective like Dyanna and solve mysteries of traveling glaciers, extinct insect species, and movements in the earth's crust! Here's how:

- 1 Look for rocks that seem interesting to you. There's no "right" way to look!
- 2 Put the rocks into an egg carton and label where you found them.
- 3 Identifying how a rock formed can help us understand its ecosystem when it formed millions of years ago. Use books or an internet search to identify the types of rocks you find:
  - Igneous rocks are formed from magma deep in the Earth, or lava from a volcano.
  - Sedimentary rocks are formed by layers of decomposed plants and animals and tiny pieces of other rocks or sand.
  - Metamorphic rocks are formed when rocks get caught in between the Earth's plates, heating and squishing them.
- 4 Group the rocks by size, shape, color or where they are from. Use a special magnifying glass called a hand lens to get a close look at fossils or little crystals embedded in the rocks.
- 5 Keep looking and collecting! (Make sure you check if it's OK to take the rocks home with you. Most state parks want to preserve nature for all to enjoy.)

## Your Wisconsin Rockhound List

**DOOR COUNTY**  
Limestone ledges with fossils inside (brachiopods, crinoids) and gravel brought in by glaciers

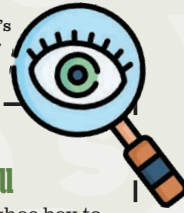
**HORICON MARSH**  
Plants growing and depositing layers of organic material to make sedimentary rocks

**ST. CROIX**  
Volcanic rock and agates formed from silica stained by iron (making red stripes like rust)

**WAUPACA CHAIN OF LAKES**  
Large sedimentary structures made from sand, gravel, and rocks trapped in the Ice Age's Cary Glacier

## Can You Find It?

It's a big world out there, and there's so much to see on family trips to the lake or forest. During your travels, keep your eyes peeled for these cool items – and don't forget to take note of anything that's interesting or unusual!



### Take it With You

Bring a shoe box to collect the items in this scavenger hunt

- Shell**  
*From a nut, snail, or water creature, or eggshell*
- Pinecone that's longer than it is wide**
- Branch with thorns**  
*Don't prick yourself!*
- Bird feather**
- Rock that sparkles**  
*Look closely – the sparkle may be tiny!*
- Seed or seed pod**
- Piece of trash**  
*Bonus points for keeping the Earth clean!*
- Blue flower**
- Leaf with a hole in it**  
*What do you think made that hole?*
- Cattail**
- Stick in the shape of a letter**  
*Try to find one that isn't just an I.*
- Piece of bark**  
*Don't take it off a tree though!*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY FREEMK



# CRITTERS UP CLOSE

Here's how to safely catch a wild friend

**A FRIENDLY VISIT** from a toad or an unexpected caterpillar drop-in reminds us that when we're playing outside, we're not alone.

Howard April, a park naturalist at the Wehr Nature Center, says visiting a local nature center is a great way to learn more about wildlife, but we can also do

this by finding and trapping critters in our own backyards.

Start by washing off any sunscreen or bug spray. Our animal friends are very sensitive to their environment.

After trapping a critter – be careful to handle it gently! – put it in a plastic bucket or a pickle jar with holes in the top. This is what April calls its animal motel. He says it's best to return critters to their natural home quickly – after a few hours at most.

Being removed from its natural home is stressful for a critter, so try to touch it as little as possible and don't try to feed it. (It probably won't have much of an appetite anyway.)

Before sending the critter home, April recommends recording your visits in a digital scrapbook. Snap a picture with the animal and write down the date you found it, the story and any other thoughts about it to document these adventures.

Is it OK to Catch?

**YES!**

Frogs, toads, turtles, grasshoppers, butterflies, fireflies, worms  
**REMEMBER:** Be gentle!

**Best Enjoyed from Afar**

Snakes, mammals, birds



## Take a Picture

Find these things but leave them in nature.

- Animal track**  
*What do you think made it?*
- Plant that is more than two colors**
- Berries on a bush or tree**  
*Just don't eat them!*
- Three different kinds of trees**  
*Look for differences in bark and leaves*
- Moss or fungus**
- Hole in the ground**  
*What do you think made it?*
- Animal dung**  
*Is it from a bird, rodent, deer or ... something else?*
- Nest or cocoon**
- Ants on a log**  
*Real ones, not the snack!*
- The most beautiful thing you saw today**  
*Take lots of pictures and decide at the end of the day*