



Minimum Impact in the Boulderfields

by Jason Love

1. Boulderfields and clifflines are distinct ecological communities that are host to unusual and sometimes rare flora and fauna. Until climbers recognize these areas as distinct ecological communities, climbing areas will continued to be treated as outdoor gyms and will be unduly impacted.
2. Are there rare/endangered flora and fauna found in the area? The park may have an inventory of some of the lichens/plants/fauna that are found on and around the boulders. Find out what they are and how to identify them so your actions won't impact them.
3. Consider not making the place public. Don't announce the site to everyone. I know some areas that have some great bouldering potential, but the amount of cleaning involved (cleaning = systematically removing vegetation to establish a route) and the impact that climbing would have on the area makes the site unfit for climbing (i.e., ecology wins over climbing).
4. If you decide that the site is worth developing (your impact won't unduly affect plants and critters, especially those that may be rare or endangered), clean individual holds and not the whole rock face. You are establishing a route, not a highway. Expose the holds and leave the blank areas intact with lichen, etc. When cleaning, use a toothbrush. Stay away from steel bristles.
5. Prune thoughtfully. I have seen entire trees cut down, when removing one limb would have sufficed. When pruning, cut the limb nearly flush. Better for the tree and the climber (no sharp limbs to fall on).
6. Consider not topping out on climbs. Many times, there is a lot of vegetation that thrives in the humus atop boulders. Topping out tramples this vegetation.
7. Educated backpackers and hikers follow rules from LNT (Leave No Trace). Learn these rules and apply them to climbing. High impacted areas are better to climb at (from an ecological standpoint) than areas that have not been developed. One more person visiting HP40 or Sandrock isn't going to impact the ecological community that much.
8. Take a picture of a boulder before you develop it. After you develop the boulder, take another picture. If the site gets discovered by other climbers, take another picture. A picture is worth a thousand words.
9. Have fun. Climb like the white guy from Kung Fu (he didn't make any prints when walking on rice paper) - what was that guy's name?