

# Maine Coast Heritage Trust Take-Along Tidepooling Guide

*What is a  
tide pool?*

MCHT stewards **Caitlin Gerber** and **Kirk Gentalen**, who care for MCHT preserves, explain that tide pools are typically formed in indentations in rocks or ledges. When the tide comes up, an indentation fills with water, and when the tide goes out, the water stays. While some sessile creatures, like barnacles, will stay in a tide pool, others move around. Because the pool refreshes each tidal cycle, repeated visits to the same spot can lead to new discoveries.

*Kirk's rules for  
responsible tidepooling*

**Creatures that live in the intertidal zone are tough, but tidepoolers should still try to lessen their impact, following these guidelines to explore with respect.**

**Wash off sunscreen**

"There's nothing worse than sticking your hand in a tide pool and seeing rings of oil around your arm."

**Respect the "one-tug rule"**

"If you pull on it once and it doesn't want to come off, it stays."

**Bring a bucket**

"That way you don't have to handle stuff too much."

**Put animals back where you found them**

"That snail might have spent the last two weeks getting out of that other tide pool because there's a predator in there."

Bring  
this guide to visit  
MCHT preserves!  
Flip over to learn  
where to go!

## *Caitlin's tide-pool scavenger hunt*

**Barnacles**

Barnacles attach to rocks in the intertidal zone during their larval stage. Above the surface, the plates of their body close up like a fortress, to hold water inside. Quiet visitors might witness barnacles feeding below the water by waving feather-like legs around to catch microscopic particles.

**Green Crabs**

Crabs with five spines on the outside of each eye are invasive green crabs that eat local filter feeders, including clams and mussels. Despite the name, they come in many colors and are very good at camouflage.

**Hermit Crabs**

Known scavenger feeders, hermit crabs

even scavenge for abandoned shells in which to live, trading up as they grow larger.

**Periwinkles**

European settlers accidentally brought periwinkles to the region. The small sea snails feed on algae and can be coaxed

out of their

shells with gentle humming.

**Mussels**

There are far fewer blue mussels in tide pools than a decade ago, likely due to green crabs and warming ocean temperatures. Unlike the farm-raised mussels people usually eat, wild mussels filter through a lot of sediment and can form pearls.

**Minnows**

Saltwater minnows will sometimes get caught in tide pools, where they can hide from larger, predatory fish. If they want to get back to the ocean, they can walk across rocks on their fins!

**Seaweed**

Seaweed, a form of algae, can wash in with the tide and also grows in the

intertidal zone.

Knotted wrack and bladderwrack both have air bladders (fun to pop) to help the plants float.

**Starfish**

Where there are mussels, there may be starfish. The most commonly found in Maine tide pools are northern sea stars, which spit their stomach outside of their body to feed.





# WHY IS LAND CONSERVATION IMPORTANT?

**T**ide pools are found in the intertidal zone, a unique marine ecosystem that serves as a habitat for myriad plants and animals. Tide pools can be nurseries for certain fish species – and lobsters! – and also provide a food source for shorebirds. Preserving the land upshore from tide pools is important. This can help prevent issues like runoff and erosion that often result from development. “Keeping the upland happy and healthy keeps the intertidal zone happy and healthy as well,” says MCHT steward Caitlin Gerber. “You need that level of conservation to make sure these sensitive areas are kept in balance.”

MCHT is a nonprofit land-conservation organization protecting and caring for vital lands on the coast of Maine, including in the intertidal zone. Through the generosity of donors, MCHT has protected more than 179,000 acres and 335 islands, including more than 155 public preserves, since its founding in 1970.

## →Our favorite MCHT tidepooling preserves!

**BOG BROOK COVE, Cutler and Trescott**  
Bog Brook Cove features gravel and cobble beaches, breathtaking views of the Bold Coast, 5.5 miles of trails, including a universally accessible trail,

and abundant wildlife viewing. Try the second beach to the south of the Moose Cove beach for your best chance at **tidepooling**.

There are two main parking areas. The south lot, in Cutler, has access to the Norse Pond Trail and Bog Brook Cove Beach. Use the north lot, in Trescott, to access the universally accessible trail, the

beaches at Moose Cove, the Chimney Trail, and the Ridge Trail.

**MALAGA ISLAND, Phippsburg**  
Malaga Island was once home to a mixed-race fishing community forcibly removed by the state in 1912. The island is now a public preserve and important Maine historic site. The rocky, rugged shoreline provides ample **tidepooling**, and visitors can enjoy learning more about the people who lived on the island before the state evicted them.

Malaga Island is located near the mouth of the New Meadows River in Phippsburg. The best landing area is on the white shell hash beach on the island’s north end. The nearest public boat launch is the Holbrook Street Landing, in Cundy’s Harbor.

**WHALEBOAT ISLAND, Harpswell**  
The largest wild island in Casco Bay, Whaleboat’s scenic campsites, rocky shoreline,

gravel beaches, and expansive meadow invite endless exploration. In addition to **tidepooling**, Whaleboat is great for camping, birding, and picnicking.

Whaleboat Island is located west of Harpswell Neck, in Casco Bay. The closest public boat ramp is the Mere Point launch, in Brunswick, just over 5 miles to the north-northeast. A private boat ramp at the Dolphin Marina, in Harpswell, is also available, roughly 1 mile to the southeast.

**Go to [mcht.org/nature-guide](https://mcht.org/nature-guide) to download this guide and learn more about conservation on the coast.**



**Maine Coast  
Heritage Trust**