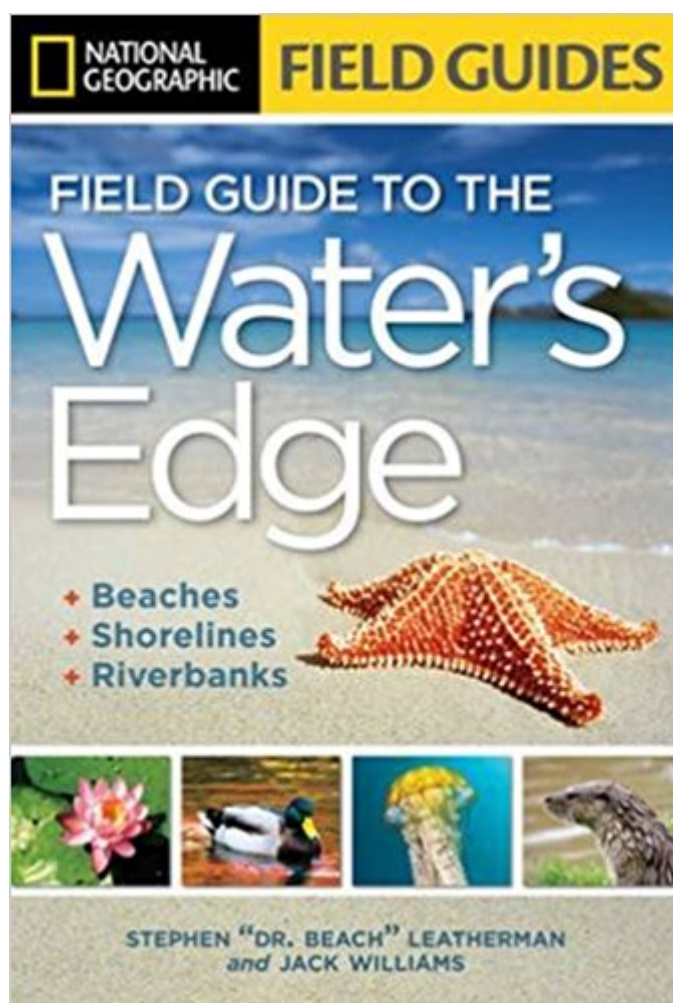


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# National Geographic Field Guide To The Water's Edge: Beaches, Shorelines, And Riverbanks (National Geographic Field Guides)



## Synopsis

The book guides the exploring naturalist to water's edge destinations throughout North America including Canada and Alaska. Main sections of the book cover three ocean coastlines--Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Pacific; estuaries and wetlands; lakes, including the Great Lakes; and rivers, from the great Mississippi and Columbia to backyard streams. Identification guides and interesting information on plants, animals, shells, and other curiosities to be found along each water's edge accompany photographs and illustrations. Useful and inviting sidebars enhance every page: [Shore Science](#)--Quick hits and fascinating facts of science along the water's edge [Stay Safe](#)--Alerts about shoreline dangers and how to avoid or respond to them [Beachcomber's Guide](#)--Illustrated key to objects found in each beach and shoreline region [Save the Shore](#)--Notes on how humans can hurt--and help--shoreline ecology [Best Water's Edge](#)--Throughout, "Dr. Beach" recommends the top beach or shoreline destinations. The book is profusely illustrated with photographs, maps, and explanatory diagrams. An introductory section provides a thorough overview of the basic science of shorelines: How water interacts with land to form beaches; how various kinds of shorelines formed; why large waves are needed to form beaches; how floods and fast-moving water alters river shorelines; how the gravitational pull of the moon and sun cause the tides; why the oceans have tides but the Great Lakes don't; how tides affect rivers far inland; the effects of latitude and climate on the formation of shorelines, including variations in plants and animals. This opening sets up all the science necessary to understand and use the rest of the book.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

STEPHEN LEATHERMAN is a world-renowned coastal scientist known as "Dr. Beach" from his twenty years of naming the widely publicized "Top 10 Beaches." Leatherman has written or edited 16 books, including *Sea Level Rise: Causes and Consequences* and *America's Best Beaches*.

JACK WILLIAMS is the founding weather editor for USA Today and the author or co-author of six books including *The American Meteorological Society Weather Book: The Ultimate Guide to America's Weather*.

**Beachcombing Basics** Almost every beach visitor does a little beachcombing along the ocean's edge to see what the tide has washed in. It is a relaxing escape from everyday concerns. Other people take their beachcombing seriously, making a hobby or even a business of collecting what they like among the many objects they find. Whether you are casual or serious, beachcombing helps you connect with the ocean and some of its creatures. Start with the **Wrack Line** Wrack refers to several species of living seaweed, as well as dead vegetation of all kinds, that are washed up by waves and often are concentrated along the high-tide line, which is called the wrack line. This long row of debris stretching along the beach almost always offers fascinating discoveries—for example, the seaweed called sargassum, which contains little brown balls. The balls keep the sargassum afloat as it circles the Sargasso Sea, a huge eddy in the middle of the Atlantic. Pieces of sargassum, including their little floats, break off and drift to beaches along the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico. In wrack lines you can find many of the items that are described in this chapter. In fact, wrack lines sometimes contain more living things than any other part of a beach. Walk along the line slowly, look carefully, and you may find many creatures that you have never seen before. Wrack offers protection, nutrients, and moisture to an entire food web that includes tiny shrimplike creatures, mole crabs, ghost crabs, and shorebirds such as terns that are foraging for a meal. Seeds and nutrients in wrack washed onto the back beach may help plants become established to stabilize new dunes. **Rules for Beachcombing** Before collecting any seashells, be aware that there may be strict government regulations to follow or private property to respect. In many locations you are not permitted to take whatever strikes your fancy. In some areas, it may be forbidden to collect seashells containing live animals and even to take empty shells. Always check for possible regulations because illegal collecting may result in substantial fines. Two examples: 1. Pay attention to strict regulations banning the collection of abalone, which are

large, edible sea snails, along the California coast. 2. Florida prohibits collection of beautiful queen conchs, which have edible meat. ã ã Even where collecting mollusks is legal, you should not interfere with nature's food web by taking any living mollusk. Taking items besides living creatures may also be prohibited. For example, the National Park Service forbids removing sea glass or pottery from Spectacle Island in Boston Harbor, a prime site for finding sea glass. ã ã It is especially important to learn the rules before beachcombing at national wildlife refuges, national sea-shores, and state parks—but wildlife regulations may also apply to private property. There is another good reason not to collect shells containing living animals: When the creature dies and begins to decay, its odor may quickly become unbearable, perhaps like that of rotting fish. ã ã

**Sea Glass and Plastic** Many beachcombers collect pieces of glass that waves, sand, and water have tumbled and smoothed over many years, creating unique shapes, colors, and textures. Some collectors use them to make sea glass jewelry or art objects. The North American Sea Glass Association links collectors with its newsletter and collecting conventions. As plastic containers increasingly replace glass ones, sea glass is getting harder to find. Most beachcombers view the large amount of plastic waste on beaches as unsightly garbage. ã ã

**Did You Know?** Black patches of beach sand do not usually come from oil spills? More often these patches contain minerals darker than the usual quartz sand. ã ã

**Safety Tip** Do not pick up or prod unrecognized man-made items such as metal canisters; unexploded bombs or mines sometimes wash ashore.

This book is not intended to be a comprehensive guide to everything you may encounter on a beach or a shore. Neither will it be useful to a professional biologist or limnologist or marine scientist. It will be most useful for casual vacationers, and you will need to supplement it with more specific field guides to sea shells, marine invertebrates, birds, animals, etc., depending upon where that vacation will be spent. It is a great starting place for further study, especially for the intelligent and curious seeking to expand their knowledge.

Informative resource with lovely photographs and excellent descriptions. Highly recommend for the use of the entire family. The adults and children both love it. A nice book for sharing when you are out exploring at the water's edge. The National Geographic Field Book is a compact size 5 3/8" x 8". It is larger than a back pocket of a man's jeans. In case you are light backpacking, the book weighs 15.4 ounces The paperback is nicely bound with substantial pages and quality National Geographic photographs and nature descriptions. It has enough general knowledge to explain your beach water's edge discovery and enough to stimulate one to more science research elsewhere, if

interested.

I love this book. And it was in great condition

A very poor, superficial job, one that is off-putting to a novice seeking information and insulting to the intelligence of a knowledgeable beach naturalist. No one broke a sweat on this "guide," and it is on the same level as much of the Nat. Geo. TV programming. An unfortunate product given the excellence of the Nat. Geo. magazine.

I wanted info for South America and around the world--was disappointed that it focused on the US. If you want US info, this book is great.

This is not a very detailed little book. It seems to be written for children.

This is a pretty guide to things found at the beach. However, it is VERY basic-not really what I was expecting.

Yes, they talk about the 'best' beaches, etc. But I was hoping for more than a school lesson on bugs and animals...

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