

PICTURE OF GREEN SIGN

You, Your Dog, and Environmentally Significant Areas

What dog doesn't enjoy a nice romp outside? It's fun to take your dog on walks in natural areas. But there are rules: they must stay on a leash and owners must pick up their feces.

WHY? MY DOG ISN'T HURTING ANYTHING!

Actually, there are good reasons for keeping your dog on a leash.

PEOPLE REASONS

While your dog might be friendly, not everyone is comfortable around dogs. Some children and adults are afraid of dogs while others don't want muddy paw prints on their clothes. Be one of the considerate people and keep your dog on its leash.

Commented [SM1]: Change to: "Is comfortable with dogs" – less likely to insult

Dog waste creates an unclean trail for other users (ever step in it?).

Commented [SM2]: Any info on dog waste being ecologically detrimental?

HEALTH OF YOUR DOG

Some dogs interact with other dogs on the trail in an unacceptable manner.

Some plants are toxic to dogs. Milkweed, which is common in many natural areas, contains several toxins throughout the plant, including galitoxin and cardiac glycosides. Other plants like poison ivy and poison oak are also harmful to dogs.

Commented [SM3]: Poison ivy, poison oak could be added too

Read more at: <https://wagwalking.com/condition/milkweed-poisoning>

WILDLIFE REASONS

Dogs are perceived as predators by most wildlife. This elicits an alarm response which is damaging in the long term. Dogs cause the disruption of normal wildlife activity such as bedding, grooming, or feeding, and can further harass wildlife by chasing and killing it. In particular, pregnant wildlife and newborn animals do not have the energy reserves to repeatedly expend in avoiding dogs. Both types of predation are severely reduced, if dogs remain leashed.

In one **ESA**, a dog cornered a deer against a fence behind a house. The deer got caught up in the fence and the dog began attacking the deer. The police had to be called to put down the deer.

Commented [SM4]: Which?

“Dog walking caused a 41% reduction in numbers of bird individuals detected and a 35% reduction in species richness” –Peter Banks & Jessica Bryant, University of New South Wales, published in Biology Letters in December 2007

Commented [SM5]: Might be better to tweak the language to be about being off leash rather than vilifying dog walking altogether

There is a rapidly growing body of evidence by ecologists who study predator-prey interactions, suggesting that the most profound effects of carnivores on prey may be through fear rather than mortality. The non-lethal effects of predators can include habitat displacement to safer but less desirable areas (e.g. less food or shelter), increased stress, reduced feeding, and decreased reproduction.

Jennie Miller, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, published in the Yale Environmental Review, November 2012

Dogs are responsible for some transmission of diseases to wildlife including distemper, rabies, parvovirus, and parasites.

Dog waste is not natural. Dogs eat a variety of processed foods with many chemicals that can harm the soil and plants. **(need examples or delete)**

Commented [SM6]: Might need to include concrete examples of harm

SUMMARY

People and their dogs disturb wildlife, and people are not always aware of or willing to acknowledge the significance of their own impacts. ~~People with dogs are much more detrimental to wildlife than people alone, off-leash dogs are worse, and off-trail impacts are the highest.~~

Dogs off leash are significantly more detrimental to the natural environment than when they are on leash. ESAs are areas where we try to protect and enjoy an intact ecosystem so keeping dogs on leash is essential to ESA preservation