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To:
Subject: Major crime in NPs? Rock theft!

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Leave the rocks alone

What is it about some people that they can't leave the rocks alone?

Rangers at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park have had to make a public appeal to people to stop piling up rocks.

It turns out it's not just unsightly and offensive to some Hawaiians, it's also a federal crime to do it in a national park.

The same thing has been going on for years in Maui County, notably along the highway from Nakalele Point to Kapalua. Little cairns of lava rocks dot the makai side of the road.

The piles of rocks also show up in Haleakala Crater, although so far the rangers have not made a public appeal about them, as the Big Island rangers did.

These illiterate versions of "Kilroy was here" do nothing to improve the look of the islands, and like graffiti, they become an excuse for copycats to duplicate the acts of vandalism.

On Lanai, there was an excuse. Hunters used rock piles to mark trails, but then other people created piles aimlessly, just for fun, which destroyed their purpose as trail markers.

Little towers of rocks are not the only problem. At Haleakala National Park and at Volcanoes, they regularly disappear into luggage.

Years ago, a ranger thought to deter rock-nappers by concocting a story that carrying away lava created by the volcano goddess Pele would bring bad luck.

This seems to have had minimal effect on the outflow of rocks, although it has resulted in a steady, though smaller inflow of rocks mailed back to the parks by people who did have bad luck after they went home.

This is not a real fix, however, since no one knows where to put the rocks back.

On the Big Island, Hawaiian kupuna Pele Hanoa appealed, "We don't want those rock pilings put up all over the place. That's desecration of our culture."

Surely no one intends it to be that. People on vacation are idlers, and we all know that idle hands turn idly to mischief.

Most people know enough not to pick flowers in a public park or carve their initials in trees in a wildlife area. Rocks, at least around here, deserve the same hands-off treatment.