

ROCK ART

Rock Legacy

Archaeologists are just beginning to unravel the mysteries surrounding the ancient people who lived on the many islands that are now part of the Tongass National Forest. There is presently no way of knowing how old the symbols are except by association with living sites or by comparing how the designs may have evolved.



Where to Look!

Pictographs are most often found in sheltered rock overhangs or caves high above the waters edge where they are protected from the weather.

Petroglyphs can be found near the coastline at or below the high tide mark. Many times they are located close to a salmon spawning stream where they face the open sea and may have welcomed the return of the salmon people.

When we view these ancient pictures, we are transported back in time to a world we can only know from the stories the rocks reveal.

Rock Clues

The oldest rock drawings appear to have been made by a maritime people who migrated here as early as 10,000 years ago. Archaeologists have found similar abstract symbols along the coast of both Siberia and Alaska.

You Can Help

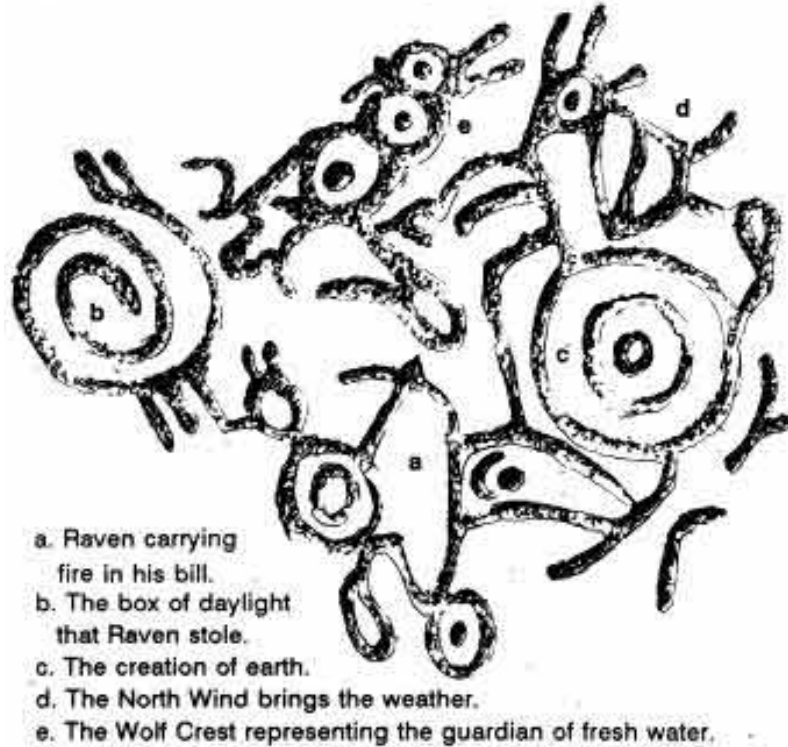
The next few years are crucial to the preservation of rock art. Destruction can occur from both natural and human causes. However, vandalism and theft continue to be the greatest threat to the future of this important heritage resource. If we deface or destroy a portion of the rock art, it is like tearing pages from a great mystery novel.

Art On Rocks

Humans have painted or pecked designs on rocks or walls of caves for thousands of years. The tales the symbols tell offer us a glimpse into the lifestyle of an ancient people and how they adapted to the world as they knew it. A pictograph is a design painted on rock with pigments made by mixing grease or salmon eggs with charcoal, clay, or other minerals. A petroglyph is pecked or ground into the surface of a rock.

Stories the Rocks Tell

Long ago a Tlingit elder interpreted this pictograph as showing how Raven created the world.



Much of the rock art on the Tongass has yet to be discovered. If you think you may have found a new petroglyph or pictograph, or if you witness vandalism or looting of an archaeological site, please notify the nearest Forest Service Office. With respect and integrity, we can save this vital link with the past for our children in the future.