

## **Lichen Series:**

I believe that the essence of magic in our modern world is imagination. Magic is the ability to imagine the impossible. Nature is that space, that silence where the imagination can grow. From the magic of imagining, the second part of the magic is will, and from that imagining we can get the will to change this world.

On one of my hikes I was really taken by these bright orange lichens scattered like polka dots across the rocks. It was impossible for me to look at them without smiling. I continue to be fascinated by these incredible organisms.

Besides appearing in many different eye-popping shapes and colors, lichens are impressively resilient. Often referred to as a 'pioneer species', lichens are typically the first organisms to colonize environments absent of life. While their pioneer reputation is impressive, they are a slow-growing species; sometimes expanding as little as .5 millimeters a year.

As weird as it may sound, these lichens are inspiring to me. They remind me that progress takes time, and beauty--whether it's an orange lichen, or being the best version of myself--can still thrive even in the harshest of conditions.

Lichens aren't so different from us! They remind us that progress, which is often painfully slow, is still a miraculous accomplishment. They teach us that joy can spread and beauty can bloom in seemingly impossible conditions. Like people, the miracle of their existence is worth celebrating.

- Molly Gambardella