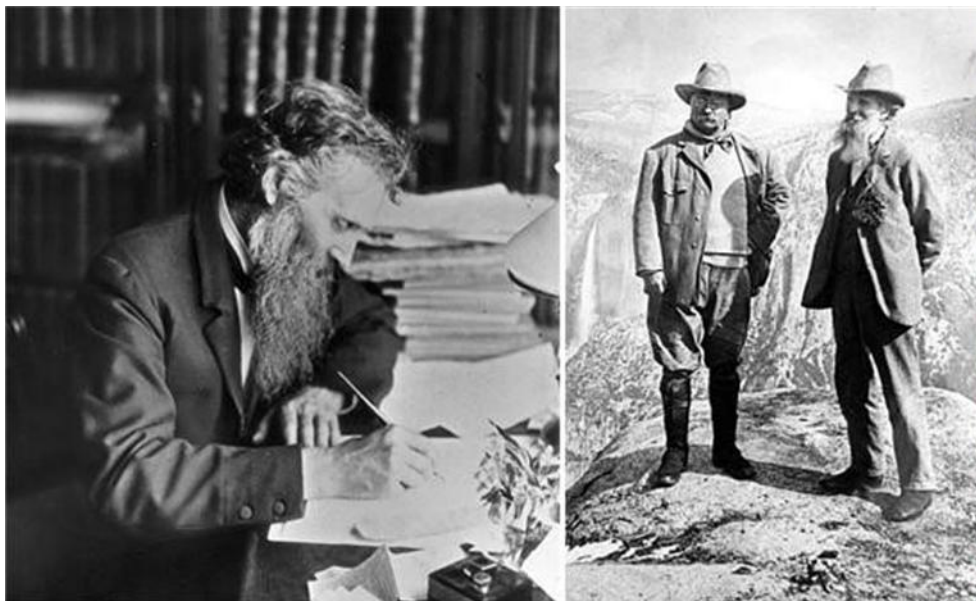


John Muir



Who was John Muir?

Born in 1838 in the Scottish port of Dunbar, John Muir emigrated aged 11 with his family to the USA where he later became a founding father of the conservation movement and devoted his life to safeguarding the world's landscapes. At home in the wild, John Muir made countless expeditions amongst mountains, forests and glaciers, and has inspired thousands with his writing and passion for wild places. He influenced the creation of Yosemite National Park (one of the first National Parks), was a founding member of the Sierra Club, and campaigned for the protection of areas of North American wildness against commercial enterprises which threatened to destroy their natural heritage and beauty.

John Muir was something of an all-rounder—explorer, inventor, writer, and conservationist—who believed that appreciating nature is not enough; people must become active conservationists through action and creativity. Though a historical figure, his message of experiencing, enjoying, and protecting wild places remains vital today.

The John Muir Award is a national environmental Award scheme run by the John Muir Trust, which takes its name and inspiration from Muir. To read more about our work, visit www.johnmuirtrust.org.

Muir's modern legacy

Muir's outlook has been questioned because his writing discriminated against native American people. Some of the remarks that Muir made historically about indigenous peoples were and are not acceptable. Muir was a human being with flaws and faults, not a saint or a prophet.

Later in life, his views changed. He outgrew a very strict upbringing turning disdain into empathy towards native peoples. He grew to admire indigenous communities for their light ecological footprint and careful stewardship of the land. He wrote sympathetically about the impacts of colonialism and joined indigenous rights organisation, the Sequoya League.

Muir's work as a scientist and advocate for nature has continued relevance in modern environmental campaigning. An openness to different points of view and a capacity to change one's mind when presented with new information are character traits to be welcomed, while a focus on protecting nature for the health of the planet and all its inhabitants is more relevant now than ever.

Some people are inspired by Muir - who is your inspiration?

Across the world, activists and communities campaign for the better protection of our wild places, standing up for nature and driving positive change. Why not seek out opportunities to learn about and amplify the voices of those you feel a connection with – whether local champion, global advocate or unsung change-maker.

Muir quotes

Although John Muir claimed that he struggled with writing, some feel that – even after 100 years – Muir's words on nature, beauty, enjoyment and health remain an inspiration. See 'Useful websites' on page 4 to find more.

"Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life."

"I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in."

"Native American Indians walk softly and they hurt the landscape hardly more than the birds and squirrels"

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe."

"One day's exposure to mountains is better than cartloads of books."

"Who publishes the sheet-music of the winds or the music of water written in river-lines?"

"Camp out among the grass of glacier meadows. Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves."

"In such places standing alone on the mountain-top it is easy to realize that whatever special nests we make - leaves and moss like the marmots and birds, or tents or piled stone - we all dwell in a house of one room - the world with the firmament for its roof - and are sailing the celestial spaces without leaving any track."

Muir's chronology and legacy

- 1838 Born in Dunbar 21 April. During his childhood, John Muir learns to climb on the walls of Dunbar Castle and is fascinated by 'everything that is wild.'
- 1849 Aged 11 emigrated to the USA. He lived and worked on the family farm for 10 years, teaching himself and inventing by night.
- 1867 While working in mills and factories, Muir is blinded temporarily in an accident. Return of his sight leads to 1,000 mile walk from Wisconsin to Cuba.
- 1870 Lives in the High Sierra as a shepherd with time to study, climb and explore glaciers. Takes many esteemed visitors on explorations of the area.
- 1880 Aged 42 marries Louise Strenzel and for 6 years works as a fruit farmer and rancher.
- 1890 Yosemite National Park established in the Ahwahnee Valley.
- 1892 Co-forms the Sierra Club and serves as President for life.
- 1893 Whilst touring the UK, Muir visits his birth town Dunbar and graves of the inspirational Wordsworth and Coleridge at Grasmere, the Lake District.
- 1894 Muir's first book, The Mountains of California, is published.
- 1901 Our National Parks published.
- 1903 President Roosevelt spends 3 days camping with Muir in Yosemite. Muir's world tour begins.
- 1907 Fight to save Hetch Hetchy Valley begins.
- 1909 Stickeen published and Muir leads President Taft through Yosemite
- 1911 My First Summer in the Sierra published.
- 1912 The Yosemite published.
- 1914 Muir dies of pneumonia on Christmas Eve, aged 76.
- 1951 First UK National Park is designated (Peak District).
- 1976 John Muir Country Park designated at Dunbar, Scotland.
- 1981 John Muir House, Birthplace Museum opens.
- 1983 John Muir Trust is founded in Scotland to conserve wild land.
- 1987 John Muir Trust purchases Li and Coire Dhorrcail in Knoydar
- 1997 John Muir Trust launches John Muir Award.
- 2000 John Muir Trust purchases Ben Nevis.
- 2002/03 Scotland's National Parks are established.
- 2010 100,000th John Muir Award presented.
- 2013 21 April is designated John Muir Day in Scotland.
- 2014 The John Muir Way opens in Scotland – coast to coast between Dunbar and Helensburgh.
- 2021 John Muir Trust celebrates 21 years of Nevis guardianship.
- 2022 John Muir Trust celebrates 25 years of running the John Muir Award
- 2023 John Muir Trust celebrates the 500,000th John Muir Award presented
- 2025 John Muir Trust launches a refreshed approach to the John Muir Award



Useful websites

[John Muir Trust](#) information on the UK's leading wild land charity inspired by John Muir, including a [staff blog](#) filled with ideas for connecting to Muir's curiosity and campaigning messages in today's society.

[National Parks Service in America](#) - History of John Muir including photos, information and a [TV series](#) on his role in setting up the National Parks.

[Mission:Explore John Muir](#) - Free Muir-related activities from Mission:Explore, a group of geographers, explorers, and artists.

[John Muir Way](#) - Find out everything you need to know to connect with this coast-to-coast long-distance route across Scotland

[John Muir, Earth – Planet, Universe](#) - A graphic novel based on John Muir's life. Available free online, with accompanying resources for teachers.

[John Muir Birthplace Trust](#) - Information about John Muir and his hometown of Dunbar, including downloadable fact sheets.

[Sierra Club](#) - American Conservation Organisation founded by John Muir, with extensive resources on Muir's life.

[The Last Explorers - John Muir](#) - Short clips from the BBC series tracing Muir's journey from Dunbar to California

[Wisconsin Historical Society](#) - Search 'John Muir' to find photos, letters and drawings of some of his inventions.

Bibliography

The Story of My Boyhood and Youth
A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf
John Muir, From Scotland to Sierra
Essential Muir: A Selection of John Muir's Best
Writing
The Wild Muir

John Muir	ISBN 1841584681
John Muir	ISBN 0877971935
Frederic Turner	ISBN 0862417015
ed. Fred D. White	ISBN 1597140279
Lee Stetson	ISBN 0939666758

Books more suited to young people:

Stickeen: John Muir and the Brave Little Dog
Call Him Father Nature: The Story of John Muir
John Muir: My Life with Nature
[Mission:Explore John Muir](#)
[John Muir, Earth – Planet, Universe](#)*

John Muir	ISBN 1883220785
Patricia Topp	ISBN 1577330471
Joseph Cornell	ISBN 1584690997
Mission:Explore	ISBN 0957615809
Julie Bertagna	ISBN 978-1901077278

* Available for sale as Wildheart: The daring adventures of John Muir (ISBN 978-1930238947)