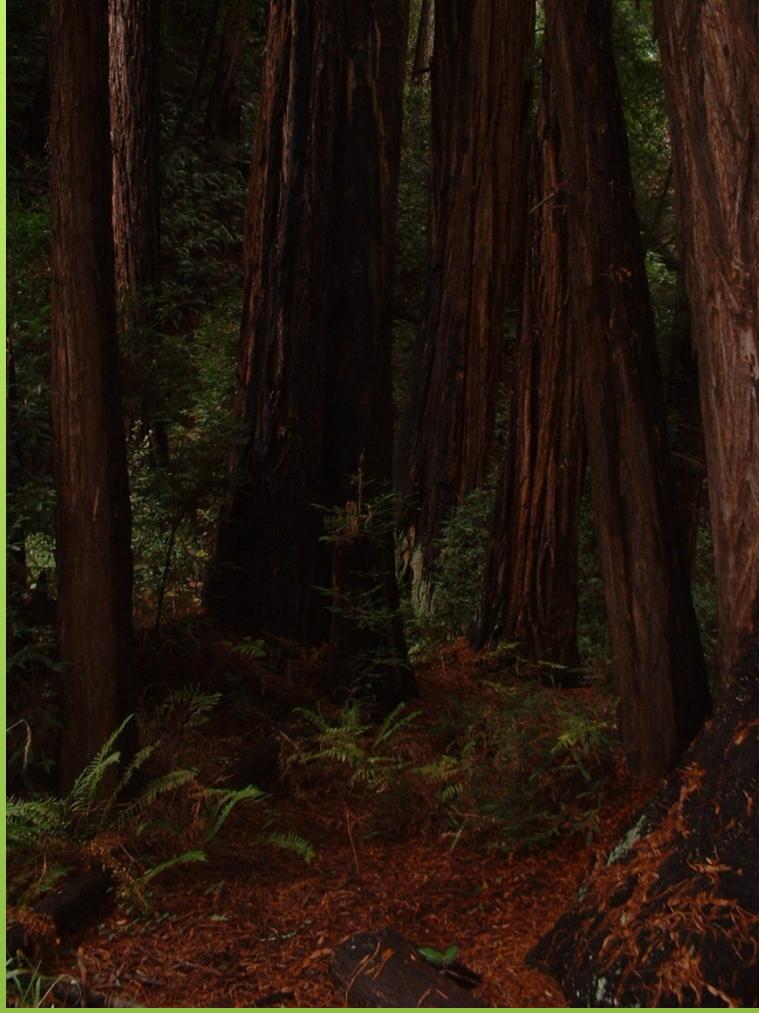
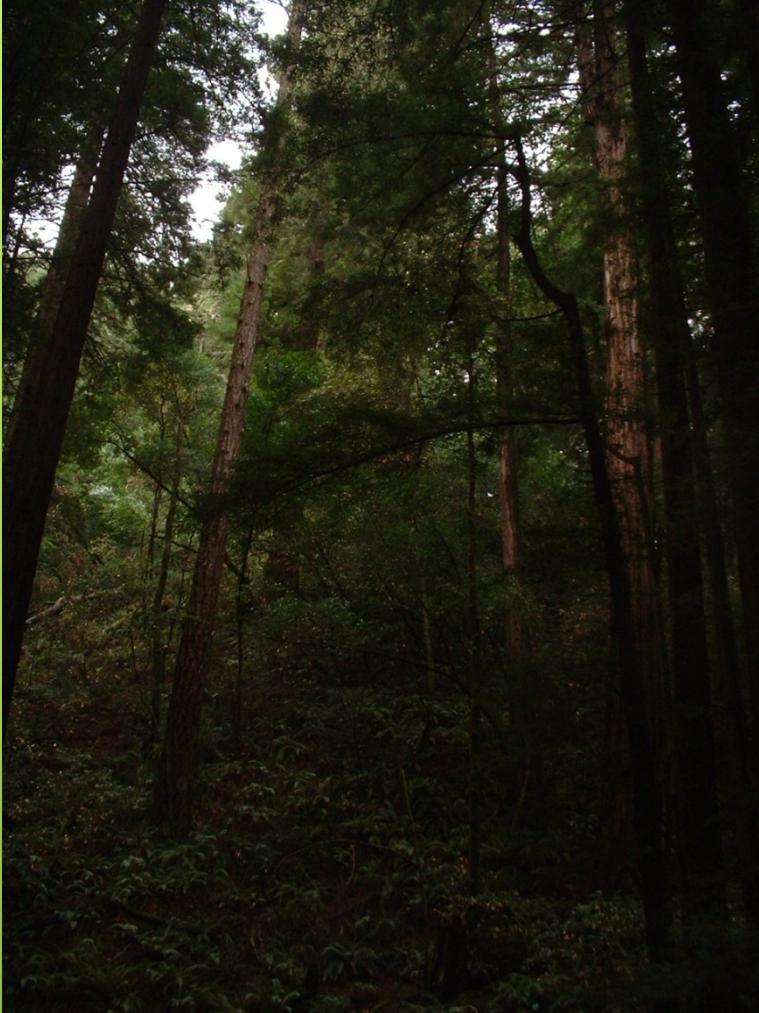


# SPIRITUAL ECOLOGY

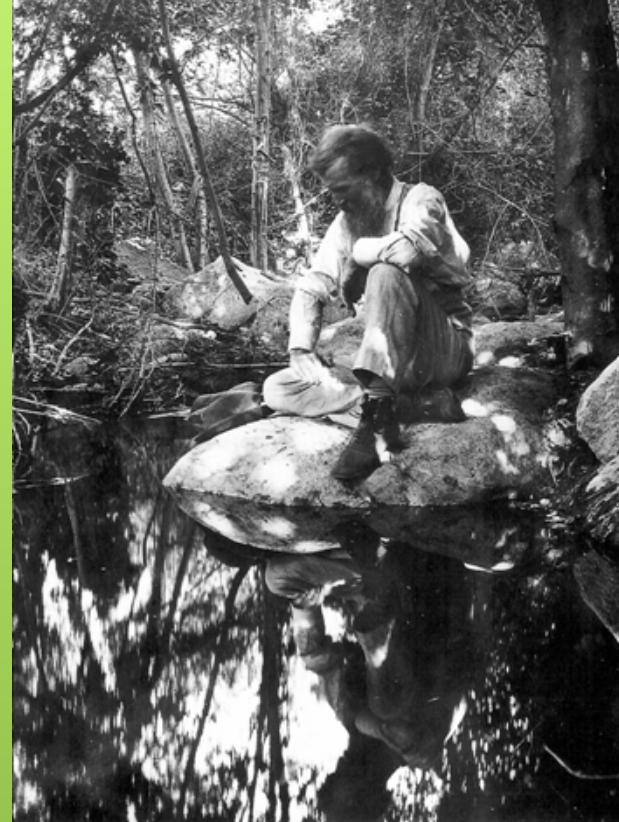
A Quiet  
Revolution

LESLIE E. SPONSEL

**Chapter 8.  
“Wilderness Disciple,  
John Muir,” pp. 57-63.**



- “Few are altogether deaf to the preaching of pine trees. Their sermons on the mountains go to our hearts; and if people in general could be got into the woods, even for once, to hear the trees speak for themselves, all difficulties in the way of forest preservation would vanish.” John Muir, 1896 (January), “The National Parks and Forest Reservations,” *Sierra Club Bulletin* 1(7):271-284. [photos by L. E. Sponsel, Muir Woods, 11-19-2012]



# John Muir's Timeline (selective)

- Born April 21, 1838, died December 24, 1914
- 1861-63 at the University of Wisconsin studied botany, geology, literature
- In 1867, after factory accident in Indianapolis, Indiana, Muir vowed to devote his life to studying God's creation and walked 1,000 miles to Cedar Keys, Florida, keeping journal and botanizing.
- 1868-72 explored Yosemite
- 1879-1912 various lengthy travels to explore Alaska, Southwest, Europe, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, S. America, Africa
- 1903 camps in Yosemite with President Theodore Roosevelt

# Muir became the most famous and influential environmental conservationist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

- Naturalist, geologist, botanist, and mountaineer
- Author of 14 books and hundreds of articles in newspapers and magazines advocating the virtues of nature and its preservation
- Especially wilderness, institutionalizing it as an enduring value in the public mind
- Prime mover in the establishment of national parks in the USA, today 59 parks covering 51,900,000 acres, plus emulated worldwide
- Founder, first president, and primary spokesperson of the Sierra Club starting in 1892, current membership 1.4 million

# Muir's home and study, Martinez, CA

(Photos by L.E. Sponsel 11-20-2012)



- In Muir's writings scholars have detected elements of Transcendentalism, Nature Mysticism, Pantheism, Animism, Buddhism, and Daoism.
- At the University of Wisconsin, Muir was influenced by reading the writings of Alexander von Humboldt and Transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau.
- He met Emerson at Yosemite in 1871, and made a pilgrimage to Concord and Walden Pond after the deaths of Emerson and Thoreau
- Muir believed that wilderness could heal and liberate people, at least temporarily, from the oppressive burdens of civilization, cities, and materialism, this reminiscent of later ecopsychology and deep ecology.
- Muir also experienced phenomena later identified as biophilia and topophilia.

# Hetch-Hetchy Valley Controversy

- During 1903-1913, nature preservationist Muir opposed Gifford Pinchot, resource conservationist (wise-use), in the construction of the dam in Hetch-Hetchy Valley adjacent to Yosemite National Park to provide water for San Francisco
- Pinchot was a pragmatic bureaucratic conservationist with utilitarian and anthropocentric values, while Muir was an idealistic nature (wilderness) preservationist with ecocentric, deep ecology, and spiritual ecology values.

# Some quotes

- “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe” (p. 12, #63)
- “The life of a mountaineer is favorable to the development of soul-life, as well as limb-life” (p. 18, #91)
- “The whole mountain appeared as one glorious manifestation of divine power” (p. 48, #212, regarding Mt. Shasta)
- “In God’s wilderness lies the hope of the world” (p. 51, #227)
- “One touch of nature makes the whole world kin” (p. 61, #278)
- “The temple destroyers, devotees of ravaging commercialism, seem to have a perfect contempt for Nature, and, instead of lifting their eyes to the God of the mountains, lift them to the almighty dollar” (p. 65, #296)
- “I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in” (p. 73, #327).

*John Muir in His Own Words*, Peter Browning, 1988.

# Recognition (among numerous cases)

- 1956 John Muir Association, Martinez, CA

<http://www.johnmuirassociation.org/>

- 1966 John Muir College, University of California, San Diego

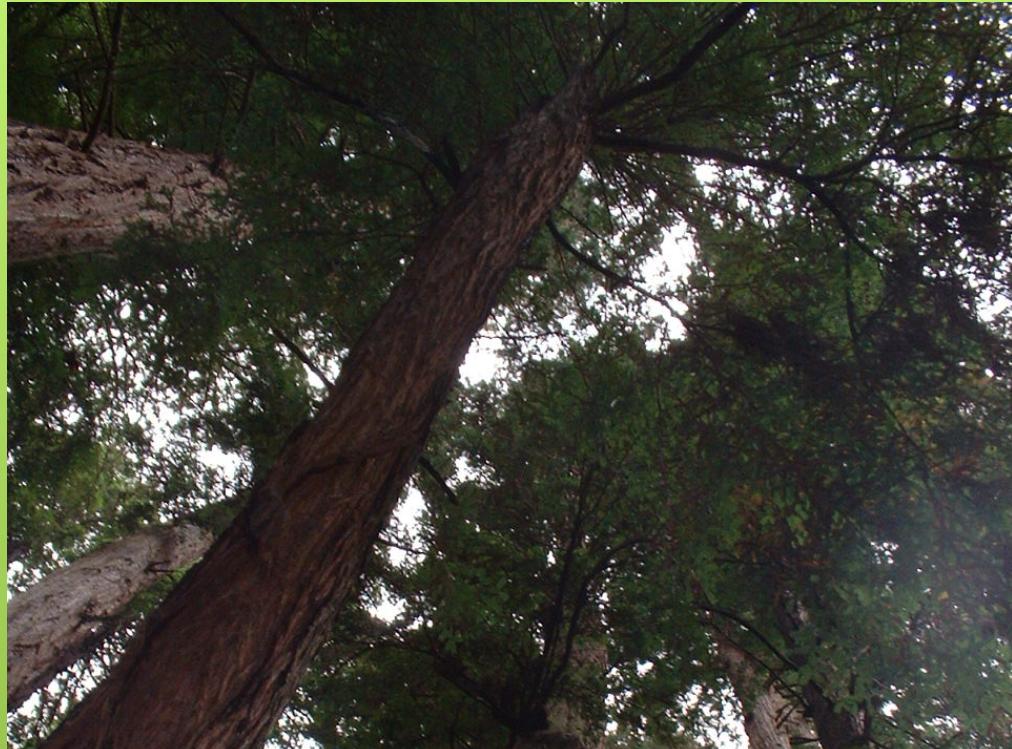
<http://muir.ucsd.edu/>

- 1989 John Muir Center, University of the Pacific

<http://www.pacific.edu/Academics/Schools-and-Colleges/College-of-the-Pacific/About/Centers-and-Institutes/John-Muir-Center.html>

# Muir Woods

(Photos by L. E. Sponsel 11-19-2012)

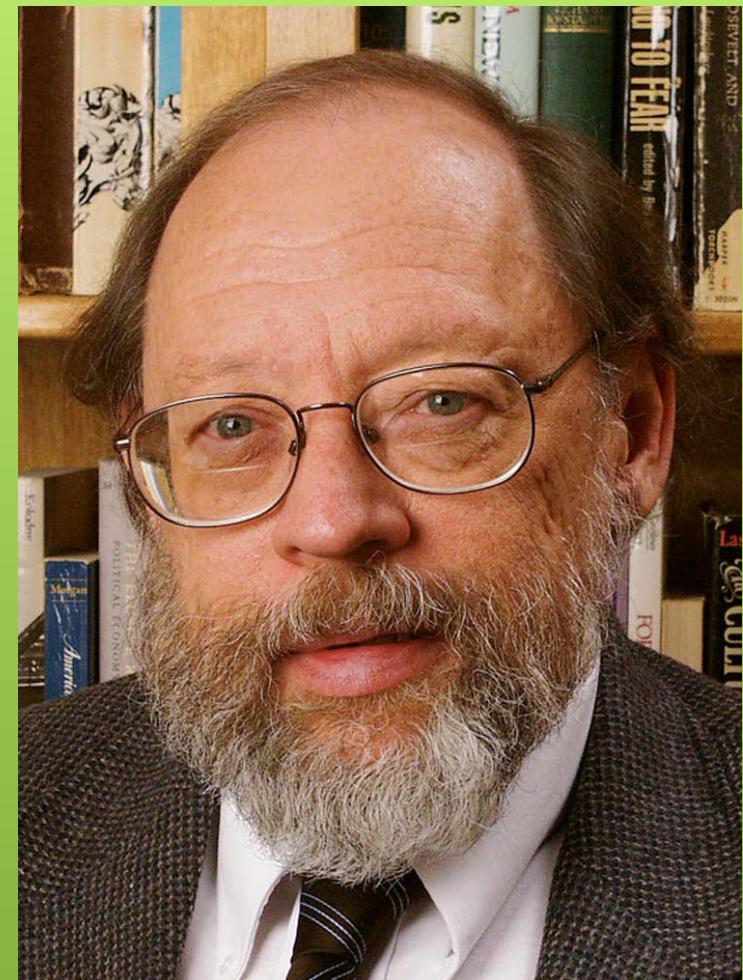
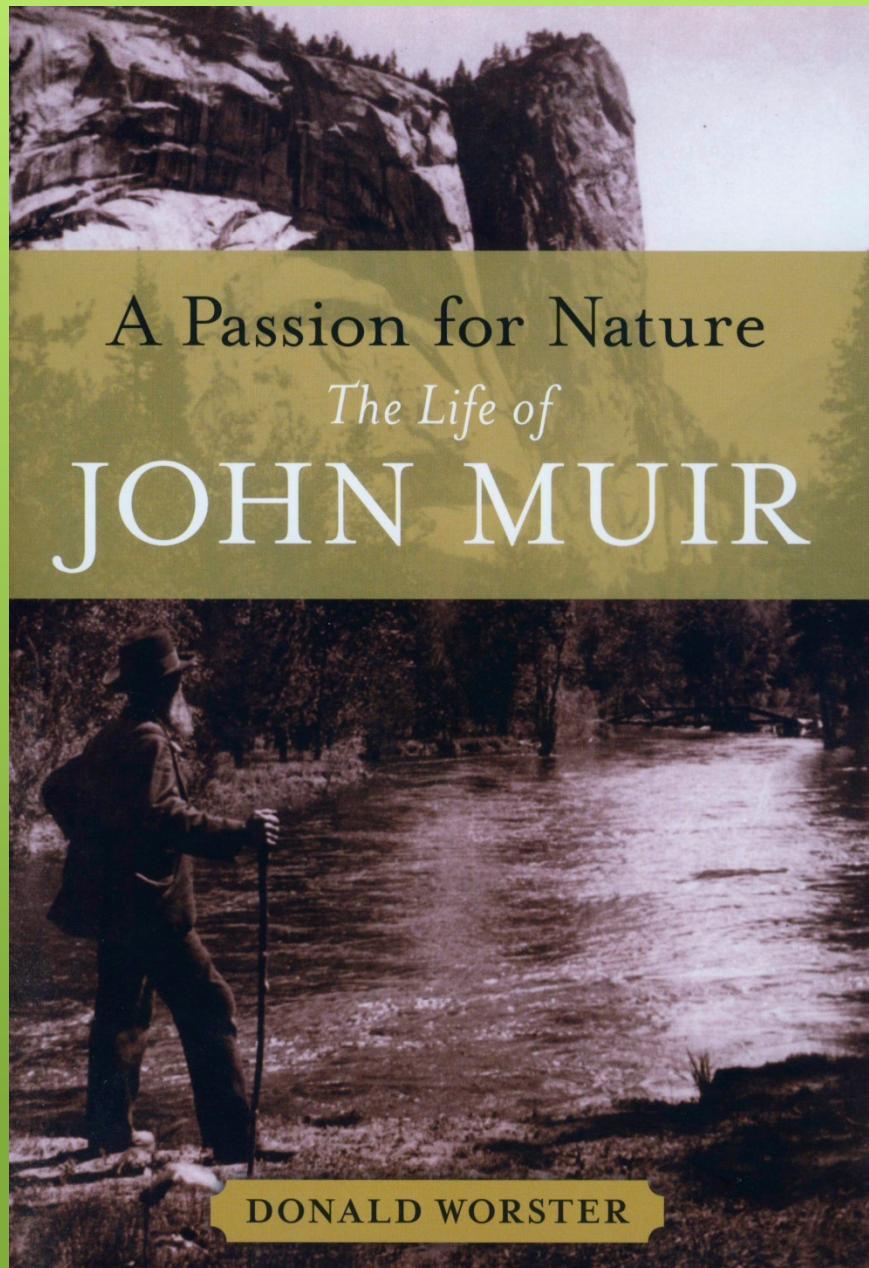


# Muir Woods National Monument Golden Gate International Biosphere Reserve, San Francisco, California

- Designated in 1908 by President Theodore Roosevelt, near San Francisco
- Remnant of ancient old-growth forest never logged
- 295 acres
- Coastal redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*)
- Now nearly 1 million visitors annually
  
- Trees can live up to 2,000 years
- Height up to 379 feet
- Diameter up to 22 feet at breast height
- Bark up to 12 inches thick

[The oldest and largest sequoia are not in Muir Woods]

# Key sources

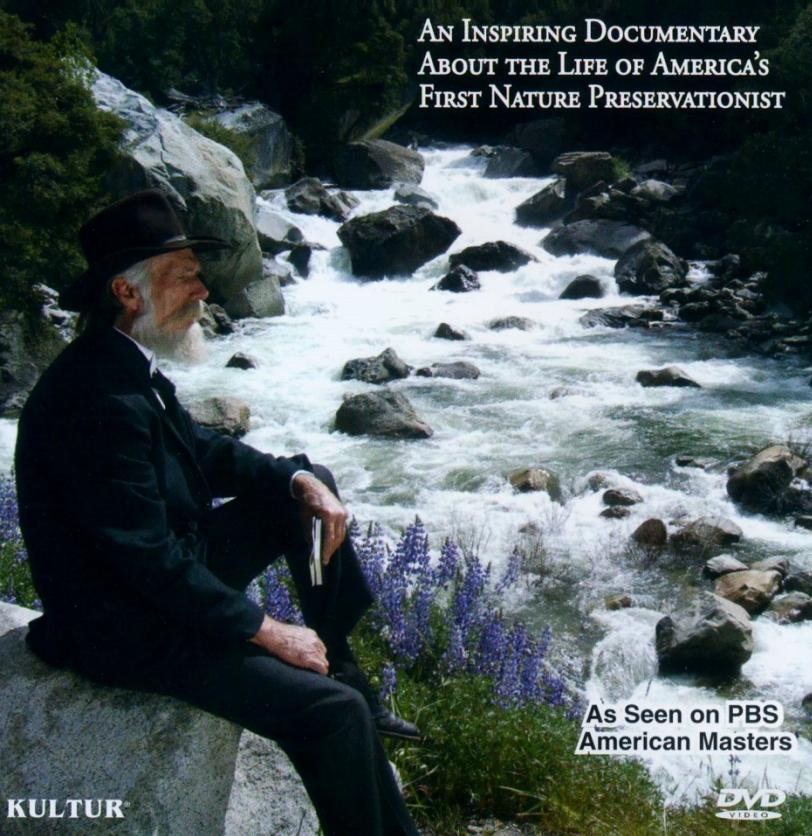


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# JOHN MUIR

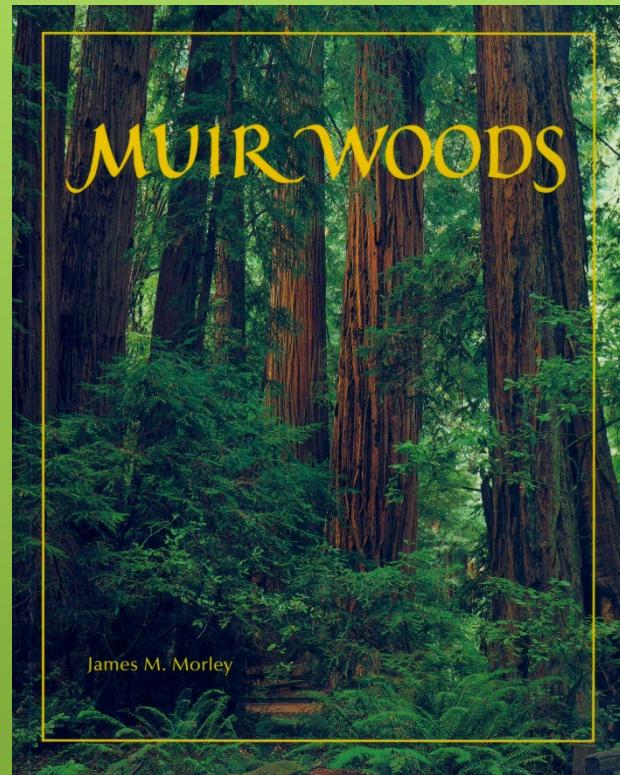
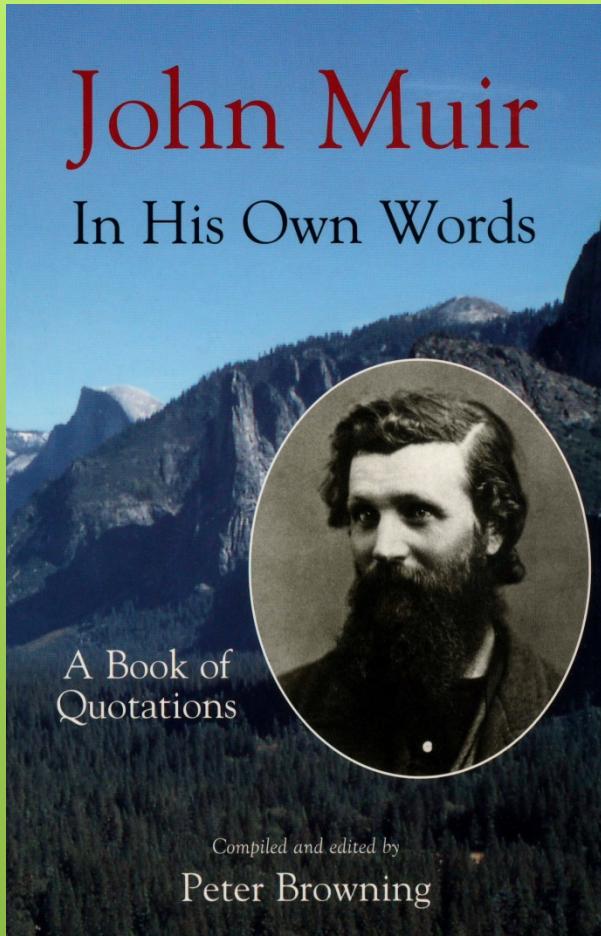
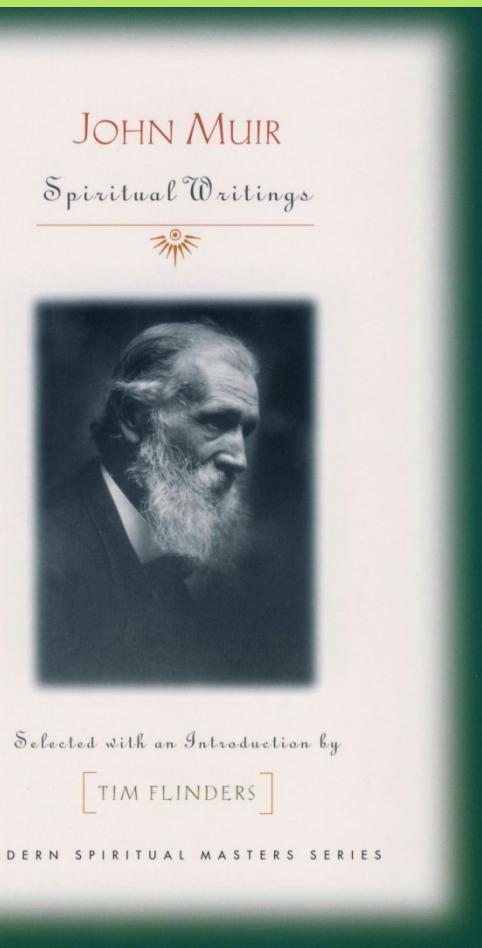
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**PBS/American Masters**

- <http://video.pbs.org/video/1883108297/>
- <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/john-muir-in-the-new-world/watch-the-full-documentary-film/1823/>



- **Sierra Club, San Francisco, CA**

[http://www.sierraclub.org/john\\_muir\\_exhibit/](http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/)

- **Muir Woods National Monument, Mill Valley, CA**

<http://www.nps.gov/muwo/index.htm>

- **John Muir National Historic Site [home, study, and farm]**

<http://www.nps.gov/jomu/index.htm>

- **John Muir Association, Martinez, CA**

<http://www.johnmuirassociation.org/>

- **Yosemite National Park, CA**

<http://www.nps.gov/yose/index.htm>

- **Climate Change in National Parks**

<http://www.nps.gov/subjects/climatechange/index.htm>



- DVD, Six-Part Series Documentary Film by Ken Burns/PBS

<http://www.pbs.org/nationalparks/parks/>

<http://video.pbs.org/program/national-parks/>

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NATIONAL BESTSELLER

# INTO THE WILD

In April 1992

a young man from a well-to-do family hitchhiked to Alaska and walked alone into the wilderness north of Mt. McKinley. His name was Christopher Johnson McCandless. He had given \$25,000 in savings to charity, abandoned his car and most of his possessions, burned all the cash in his wallet, and invented a new life for himself. Four months later, his decomposed body was found by a moose hunter...

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