

JOHN MUIR

Father of the National Parks

John Muir was a famous naturalist. He was an early supporter of wilderness preservation and conservation. He is seen as an inspiration to the modern-day environmentalist movement.

John Muir was born in Scotland, where, at a young age, he began to take an interest in nature and the outdoors. In 1849, his family immigrated to the United States, settling in Wisconsin. He attended the University of Wisconsin, where he took classes on botany and geology.

In 1864 he went to Canada and spent the summer exploring the wilderness there. When he came back, he took a job in a factory. While working at the factory, he had an accident that caused him to lose his sight for many weeks. When he got his vision back, he swore he would never again take his life for granted. He vowed to spend the rest of his life doing what he loved – being in nature.

To start, he decided to take a walk – a long one. He walked from Indiana to Florida, collecting and studying the plants he found along the way. He didn't stay in Florida long– he soon decided it was time to go overseas. After visiting Cuba, he sailed to New York and then made his way to California.

He arrived in San Francisco in 1868 and set out for Yosemite, which he had read about and wanted to see for himself. He fell in love with its natural beauty. He built a cabin on the banks of Yosemite Creek and spent the summer there, writing a book about his experience. While in Yosemite, he also began to think about the science behind the land formations and started thinking about ways to preserve, or protect, the land.

From Yosemite, he continued to travel and write and eventually settled near Oakland, California. People began to take notice of his writings. Around the late 1800s, he decided to return to Yosemite. When he arrived, he found it had changed: the land had been dug up, and trash littered the grounds. He wrote articles and books calling for Yosemite to be made into a national park so that it could be protected. Yosemite was made a national park in 1890.

In 1892 one of his editors suggested that he help start a club for lovers of the outdoors. The club became the Sierra Club, an organization that works to protect wilderness and wildlife. It still exists today.

In 1901, he published *Our National Parks* which was read by many Americans ... including President Teddy Roosevelt. Roosevelt, who was also a lover of nature, arranged a meeting with Muir. They spent a camping trip in Yosemite talking about the country's national park system and what it should be, helping create the national parks we visit today.

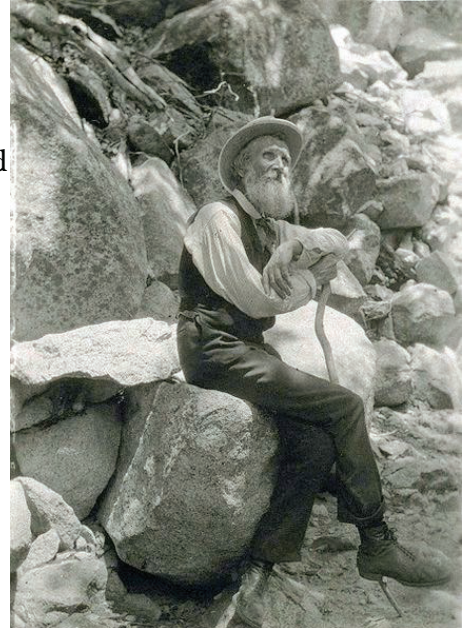


Photo of John Muir



*Half Dome, a famous rock formation in Yosemite.
Photo by Ansel Adams, a famous nature photographer
and admirer of John Muir.*

Questions!

John Muir spent almost all of his life doing the thing he loved most: being outdoors. If you could spend the rest of your life doing one thing, what would it be?

Based on what you learned in the text, match the best definition to the vocabulary word:

A. *The study of plants*

_____ Naturalist

B. *Someone who studies nature*

_____ Conservation

C. *The act of using the resources we already have*

_____ Botany

D. *Protect or keep from changing*

_____ Geology

E. *The study of rocks*

_____ Preserve