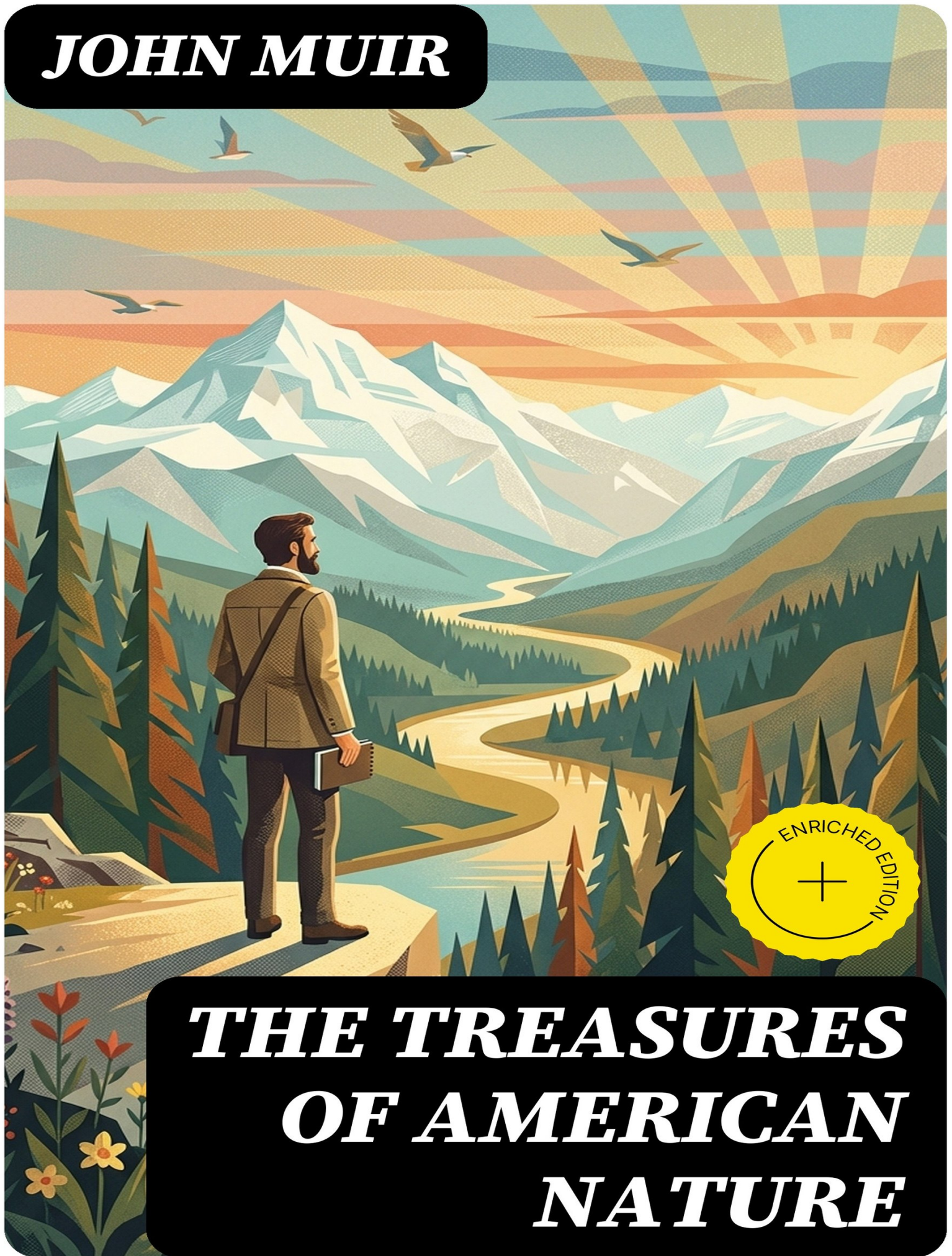


JOHN MUIR



***THE TREASURES
OF AMERICAN
NATURE***

John Muir

The Treasures of American Nature

Enriched edition. Collected Works

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Tristan West

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Introduction

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This collection, *The Treasures of American Nature*, gathers John Muir's major books alongside seminal essays, travel narratives, and addresses to present a coherent portrait of his lifelong study and celebration of the North American wild. From the granite architecture of the Sierra Nevada to the icy coasts of Alaska and the arid chasms of the Colorado Plateau, these works chart an arc of observation, reflection, and advocacy. Bringing them together allows readers to trace how Muir's field experiences, scientific inquiries, and literary craft informed one another, and how he forged a vocabulary that helped Americans recognize their landscapes as national, ethical, and aesthetic inheritances.

The scope includes full-length volumes such as *The Mountains of California*, *Our National Parks*, *The Yosemite*, *Travels in Alaska*, and the field-journal narrative *My First Summer in the Sierra*. It embraces travel and reportage in *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* and *The Cruise of the Corwin*, the compact moral adventure *Stickeen: The Story of a Dog*, and the editorial and descriptive enterprise *Picturesque California*, to which Muir contributed and for which he served in an editorial role. Complementing these are essays, studies, and addresses—among them *Studies in Sierra*, *Save the Redwoods*, and *The National Parks and Forest Reservations*—along with memorial portraits and region-specific sketches.

At the heart of Muir's corpus stand the natural-history monographs *The Mountains of California*, *Our National Parks*, and *The Yosemite*. Each introduces readers to

distinctive geologic forms, plant communities, and animal life, while explaining how processes such as glaciation, fire, and water shaped the land. Their initial premise is straightforward: to lead the attentive observer through mountain meadows, forests, and cliff-walled valleys. Yet their method fuses close, empirical attention with an exalted diction that makes phenomena intelligible and memorable. These books articulate a consistent claim—that American landscapes merit study, care, and public protection because they are both scientifically significant and artistically magnificent.

The travel narratives broaden the map of that argument. *My First Summer in the Sierra* stems from a herding season that unfolded into a revelatory apprenticeship in high-country natural history. *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* recounts an on-foot traverse from the Midwest toward the southeastern coast, recording botany, weather, and human encounters along the way. *The Cruise of the Corwin* follows a season aboard a government vessel in northern waters, while *Travels in Alaska* distills multiple journeys among fjords, forests, and glaciers. In each, the premise is similar: to walk or sail into unfamiliar country, observe keenly, and render experience into a record that enlarges knowledge and sympathy.

Stickeen: The Story of a Dog offers Muir's most concentrated narrative of companionship and trial in the field. Set against an Alaskan icescape, it begins with an unlikely partnership between a small dog and a naturalist traveling among crevasses and storms. Without unveiling its climactic turn, the account uses a single episode to explore character, perception, and the quickened senses produced by shared risk. Its brevity and clarity showcase Muir's ability to translate expedition hazards into a meditation on courage and trust, complementing the larger books by revealing how

his philosophy of nature extends to the moral intelligence of fellow creatures.

Studies in Sierra and the cluster of Yosemite essays—Yosemite Glaciers, Yosemite in Winter, Yosemite in Spring, Features of the Proposed Yosemite National Park, The Treasures of the Yosemite, and A Rival of the Yosemite—assemble Muir's most sustained inquiry into a single mountain province. Their premise is investigative: to examine how ice carved domes and valleys, how seasonal cycles animate the parklands, and how sister valleys compare in form and beauty. Presenting field measurements, observations, and reasoned argument, these pieces demonstrate his practice of testing ideas against rock, snow, and stream until landscape history becomes legible.

Advocacy enters explicitly in The National Parks and Forest Reservations and Save the Redwoods. These addresses and essays aim to persuade citizens and officials that public lands require permanent protection and wise administration. They outline reasons for reserving forests, safeguarding watersheds, and maintaining roadless sanctuaries. Features of the Proposed Yosemite National Park ties argument to mapping, describing boundaries and values to be included. Across these texts, Muir refines a rhetoric of stewardship that is civic as well as ecological, insisting that preservation serves science, recreation, and the moral education of a democratic people.

Steep Trails and Snow-Storm on Mount Shasta extend Muir's topographic range and his fascination with weather. The former gathers excursions through mountains and deserts of the American West, while the latter offers a close, experiential account of ascending and surviving a high volcanic peak in severe conditions. Yosemite in Winter and

Yosemite in Spring deepen the seasonal portrait of the valley, emphasizing how snowpack, floods, and blooms compose a year's rhythm. The Grand Cañon of the Colorado situates canyon forms within this broader gallery of wonders, presenting the Colorado River's masterpiece as a complementary chapter in the continental story.

The Hetch Hetchy Valley and A Rival of the Yosemite focus on a sister valley to Yosemite, advancing both aesthetic appreciation and practical concern. The premise is evaluative: to examine a glacial valley's features—meadows, walls, waterfalls—and to argue for its parity with more famous scenery. These essays also anticipate the valley's centrality in later public debates, underscoring that beauty and utility require careful reconciliation. By placing these assessments alongside broader park writings, the collection reveals how Muir linked particular places to general principles, making local topography a test case for national policy and public conscience.

Portraits of Edward Henry Harriman and Edward Taylor Parsons introduce a personal dimension to Muir's public work. Framed as memorial appreciations, they sketch the character and contributions of a patron of exploration and a leader in organized conservation. Their inclusion demonstrates that Muir's project relied on alliances—philanthropic support, club leadership, and scientific camaraderie—as much as solitary fieldwork. Stylistically, these pieces temper his usual landscape rapture with measured gratitude, showing how he narrated human lives with the same ethical focus he brought to forests and rivers, and how biography and advocacy intertwined within the conservation movement.

Across these works Muir's hallmarks remain consistent. He unites meticulous field observation with a cadence that

elevates description to celebration. He names plants and peaks with taxonomic care, yet also renders them as actors in a drama of ice and light. He explains processes—erosion, uplift, fire ecology—while conveying wonder without sentimentality. His prose tends toward clarity, repetition for emphasis, and metaphor drawn from music and architecture. Above all, he treats nature as community, where every creature and form participates in a larger order that merits attention, restraint, and joy. The result is a language equal to mountainous subjects.

The lasting significance of these writings lies in their practical and imaginative consequences. Practically, they helped build a case for national parks and forest reserves by educating readers, officials, and travelers. Imaginatively, they taught generations to see mountains, rivers, trees, and storms as teachers. By assembling books, journal narratives, studies, addresses, memorials, and regional sketches in one place, this collection invites readers to follow Muir's path from observation to understanding to responsibility. The *Treasures of American Nature* thus presents not only a literary achievement but also a durable ethic: to know the land well enough to cherish and keep it.

Author Biography

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John Muir (1838–1914) was a Scottish-born American naturalist, essayist, and influential advocate for wildlands whose writings helped shape the idea of national parks. Through books such as *The Mountains of California*, *Our National Parks*, *My First Summer in the Sierra*, *The Yosemite*, and *Travels in Alaska*, he united close observation with a lyrical, ethical plea for protecting mountains, forests, and glaciers. His narrative gifts are also evident in *Stickeen: The Story of a Dog* and in expeditionary accounts like *The Cruise of the Corwin*. Revered as a public thinker as well as a field observer, Muir bridged science, literature, and civic action.

Raised in rural America after emigrating from Scotland as a child, Muir combined farm labor with voracious reading and tinkering. He attended the University of Wisconsin–Madison, studying science informally before leaving to pursue practical work and long field rambles. An industrial accident and convalescence prompted a decisive turn toward a life outdoors, culminating in a long pedestrian journey south, later recounted in *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*. His education was self-directed and eclectic: botany and geology learned in meadows and workshops, and philosophical influences, notably American Transcendentalism, which sharpened his conviction that nature holds spiritual as well as scientific truths.

California's Sierra Nevada became Muir's proving ground. Working seasons in the high country, he kept notebooks on plants, meteorology, and landforms while ranging through Yosemite Valley and surrounding uplands. He advanced a

then-controversial glacial origin for much of the region's scenery, developing arguments in early essays such as *Studies in Sierra and Yosemite Glaciers*. Vivid episodes, including the harrowing Snow-Storm on Mount Shasta, conveyed both risk and rapture. Seasonal portraits like *Yosemite in Winter* and *Yosemite in Spring* paired empirical detail with a distinctive prose music. These pieces established Muir as a credible field naturalist and a persuasive public voice.

Muir's mature California writing braided science, memory, and exhortation. *The Mountains of California* offered a panorama of elevations, waters, and forests; *My First Summer in the Sierra* turned field journals into an intimate apprenticeship in attention; and *The Yosemite* synthesized decades of observation into a landmark guide to the valley and its ice-carved neighborhood. As editor and contributor to *Picturesque California*, he helped present the state's scenic richness to a broad audience. Essays like *The Treasures of the Yosemite*, *A Rival of the Yosemite*, and *Features of the Proposed Yosemite National Park* pressed aesthetic and geographic arguments for strong protection.

From writing sprang organizing. Muir helped found the Sierra Club and served as its early president, treating it as a citizens' instrument for wilderness preservation. *Our National Parks* distilled his philosophy for the general public, while *The National Parks and Forest Reservations* argued that scenic and ecological values merited enduring safeguards. He engaged survey debates and boundary lines, applying field knowledge from the Sierra to the practical politics of park-making. *Save the Redwoods* extended his plea to coastal forests, articulating a broad conservation ethic. His counsel, writings, and public stature influenced legislators and executive leaders considering new reserves.

Muir's range extended far beyond California. In Alaska he traced tidewater glaciers and botanical zones, later shaping the travelogue *Travels in Alaska* and the beloved adventure *Stickeen: The Story of a Dog*. The *Cruise of the Corwin* drew on a voyage into the Bering and Arctic seas, blending journal, natural history, and ethnographic glimpses. He interpreted Southwestern geomorphology in *The Grand Cañon of the Colorado*, bringing his glacial lens and literary resonance to desert stone. Memorial sketches such as *Edward Henry Harriman* and *Edward Taylor Parsons* testify to his ties within a wider conservation network of patrons, explorers, and organizers.

Muir's final public battles centered on the Hetch Hetchy Valley, whose beauty he had celebrated in *A Rival of the Yosemite* and defended in *The Hetch Hetchy Valley*. Though the valley was ultimately dammed, the controversy clarified preservationist principles and broadened public commitment to parks. Muir continued to write and advise from the West Coast until his death in 1914. Several narratives appeared posthumously, including *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*, *The Cruise of the Corwin*, and *Steep Trails*. Today his books, especially *The Yosemite* and *Our National Parks*, remain touchstones for conservation, inspiring scientific curiosity joined to civic responsibility.

Historical Context

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The Treasures of American Nature gathers John Muir's most influential writings against the backdrop of the United States' Gilded Age and Progressive Era, when industrialization, railroad expansion, and western settlement accelerated the transformation of landscapes. Between the 1860s and the 1910s, federal land policy, popular science, and tourism converged with intensifying timber, mining, and grazing. Muir's books, essays, and addresses in this collection trace that convergence. They chronicle early environmental advocacy, the professionalization of geology and forestry, and the emergence of national parks. Read together, these works chart shifting American ideas about wilderness, beauty, and public responsibility, while documenting how scientific observation became a moral and political argument for preservation.

A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf records Muir's 1867 trek through the Reconstruction South, later published posthumously in 1916. Traveling on foot from the Midwest to Florida, he moved through pine barrens, Appalachian foothills, and coastal swamps at a moment when former plantation regions were politically unsettled and ecologically stressed. His plant lists and notebook prose belong to a nineteenth-century natural history tradition shaped by field collecting and taxonomy. The journey's timing—just after the Civil War and before his western years—anchors the collection in a national context, linking Muir's itinerant science with broader debates over the nation's rebuilding and the meaning of its natural wealth.

My First Summer in the Sierra, published in 1911 from journals kept in 1869, depicts Muir's first sustained season in California's high country, when he worked as a shepherd and watched thousands of sheep graze the meadows. Written amid growing concern over overgrazing in the Sierra Nevada, its observations connect sensitivity to alpine botany with criticism of resource use, famously denouncing sheep as "hoofed locusts." The book situates Muir within a regional economy dominated by timber and stockraising, while foreshadowing his later park advocacy. It also preserves a record of trans-Sierra movement before road building, when seasonal labor, pack trains, and trail networks shaped access to high terrain.

Studies in the Sierra (1870s) and related essays like *Yosemite Glaciers* intervened in a vigorous scientific controversy about Yosemite's origin. Muir, writing in venues such as the *Overland Monthly*, argued that glaciers carved the valley—a view that clashed with leading figures of the California Geological Survey who favored catastrophic subsidence. His careful mapping of moraines, striations, and polished pavements helped popularize glacial theory in the American West. The debate exemplified a larger nineteenth-century dynamic: independent field observers challenging established authority. It also linked western landscape interpretation to international science, aligning Yosemite with alpine research then unfolding in the European Alps and Scandinavia.

The Yosemite (1912) consolidates decades of observation, complementing earlier pieces such as *Yosemite in Winter* and *Yosemite in Spring* that catalog seasonal conditions with unusual precision. These texts span a policy transition begun with the 1864 Yosemite Grant to California and culminating in 1906, when the state returned Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove to federal control. Their

detailed measurements, trail descriptions, and natural histories register the rise of tourism infrastructure—hotels, stage roads, and guides—while underscoring tensions between spectacle and stewardship. Together, they document how close description could serve as an administrative blueprint and a plea for restraint as visitation intensified.

In 1890, a coordinated magazine campaign helped transform advocacy into law. Century Magazine published *The Treasures of the Yosemite* and *Features of the Proposed Yosemite National Park*, pairing Muir's prose with an editor's reform strategy aimed at Congress. These pieces, alongside *A Rival of the Yosemite*, which promoted the Kings River region, advanced the case for new federal designations. That autumn, Congress created Sequoia National Park (September 1890), General Grant National Park (October 1890), and Yosemite National Park (October 1890), though Yosemite Valley remained under California until 1906. The articles illustrate how periodical culture, scenic rhetoric, and legislative timing converged to establish enduring public reserves.

The Mountains of California (1894), *Snow-Storm on Mount Shasta* (1877), and the later compilation *Steep Trails* (1918) showcase exploration tied to the West's extractive boom. These works move through logging camps, mining districts, and volcanic summits, situating alpine ecologies beside sawmills and hydraulic claims. They record a geography newly accessible by wagon roads and rail spurs, where scientific curiosity coexisted with industrial pressures. Their mountaineering scenes and close botanical notes reflect a period when summits became laboratories and symbols, while their plains-to-peak itineraries map the gradient of environmental change from valley farms to glaciated headwalls.

Picturesque California (1888–1890), which Muir edited, belongs to the Gilded Age's illustrated travel literature, where engravings and essays made scenery a cultural commodity. Issued by subscription and featuring artists and writers, the multivolume work aligns with the expanding market for images of the West. As transcontinental railroads (completed in 1869) and feeder lines grew, such pictorial volumes both fed and followed tourism, echoing guidebooks and gallery exhibitions. The emphasis on sublime and picturesque canons—granite domes, giant trees, cascades—helped fix a national iconography of nature that publishers, hotels, and readers shared, making aesthetics an ally of preservation.

Our National Parks (1901) captures a moment when the park idea was consolidating, just before Theodore Roosevelt's presidency accelerated federal conservation. Muir used the book to inventory geologic forms, forest types, and wildlife, but also to outline park purposes. Two years later, Roosevelt camped with Muir in Yosemite (1903), a widely publicized trip that symbolized presidential endorsement of stronger protections. The Antiquities Act (1906) soon enabled presidents to proclaim national monuments, enlarging the toolkit for safeguarding landscapes. Muir's text thus stands at the threshold of a policy shift, translating field science into a program for education, recreation, and restraint.

The National Parks and Forest Reservations reflects debates sharpened by the Forest Reserve Act (1891) and the 1897 Organic Act governing federal forests. Muir argued for strict preservation in parks and stricter regulation in forest reserves, decrying destructive grazing and logging. As professional forestry advanced under Gifford Pinchot and the U.S. Forest Service (created in 1905), utilitarian conservation—sustained yield and watershed protection—

often clashed with Muir's preservationist ethic. His address, circulated as a pamphlet in the mid-1890s, illuminates the conceptual boundary between parks and forests, and shows how public meetings, club gatherings, and print could shape administrative doctrine for vast western domains.

The Hetch Hetchy Valley essays document Muir's final and most controversial fight. After the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, advocates sought a secure municipal water supply within Yosemite National Park. Muir and the Sierra Club opposed damming Hetch Hetchy, arguing that a reservoir would destroy a sister valley to Yosemite. Despite a national debate, Congress passed the Raker Act (1913), authorizing the project. The defeat was bitter for Muir, who died in 1914, yet the controversy galvanized preservationists, influencing later advocacy for stronger protections and clearer limits on utility development within national parks.

Travels in Alaska (published posthumously in 1915) gathers accounts of Muir's 1879–1880 voyages along the Alexander Archipelago and into Glacier Bay, undertaken soon after the 1867 U.S. purchase of Alaska. Guided by Tlingit experts and accompanied at times by missionary S. Hall Young, Muir mapped tidewater glaciers, cataloged flora, and described communities and customs he encountered. *Stickeen: The Story of a Dog*, first printed in 1897 and later issued as a small book in 1909, distills one dangerous glacier crossing into a moral fable of courage. Both works situate glaciology within intercultural travel, missionary networks, and the opening of Alaska to scientific and popular attention.

The Cruise of the Corwin, published in 1917, draws on Muir's 1881 journals from a voyage aboard the U.S. Revenue Cutter Corwin into the Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean. The expedition, led by Captain Calvin L. Hooper, combined

search-and-rescue aims with reconnaissance along Siberian and Alaskan coasts. Muir's notes on sea ice, coastal geology, and tundra plants complement observations of Chukchi and other Indigenous communities. The narrative reflects an era when federal vessels advanced science alongside strategic interests, and when naturalists traveling on government ships helped translate remote regions into mapped, described, and thereby governable spaces in the American imagination.

The Grand Cañon of the Colorado engages a Southwest becoming newly accessible to travelers at the turn of the century. Railroads promoted excursions to northern Arizona, while scientists and surveyors transformed the canyon into a textbook of geology. Roosevelt proclaimed Grand Canyon National Monument in 1908 using the Antiquities Act; Congress established Grand Canyon National Park in 1919. Muir's essay aligns interpretive language—stratigraphy, erosional time, desert botany—with national arguments for protection. It also shows how far the park idea had traveled by the 1900s, extending from the Sierra Nevada to the Colorado Plateau as federal authority over spectacular landscapes expanded.

Save the Redwoods, published posthumously in 1920, gathers Muir's longstanding arguments for protecting California's giant trees. He had celebrated giant sequoias in the 1890 creation of Sequoia and General Grant National Parks; the essay broadens the call to include coast redwoods, whose groves were rapidly being logged. In 1918, reformers founded the Save-the-Redwoods League, and state parks followed in the 1920s; decades later, Redwood National Park was established in 1968. The essay situates venerable trees within the era's rhetoric of national patrimony, blending dendrology and patriotism to press for statutory measures and philanthropic purchase.

Two memorial sketches—Edward Henry Harriman and Edward Taylor Parsons—illuminate the alliances that enabled conservation. Harriman, a railroad executive, had sponsored the 1899 Harriman Alaska Expedition, which advanced coastal science and public interest in Alaska; Muir's tribute acknowledges the role of private wealth and logistical capacity in exploration. Parsons, a key Sierra Club leader, backed campaigns including the Hetch Hetchy fight; after his death in 1914, his widow funded the Parsons Memorial Lodge in Tuolumne Meadows. These pieces reveal conservation as a networked enterprise, dependent on editors, donors, lawyers, and club volunteers as much as on field naturalists.

Across the collection, Muir fuses science, aesthetics, and moral suasion. He wrote in a culture shaped by Romanticism and by American Transcendentalism's reverence for nature, yet he also embraced post-Darwinian geology and botany. Works like *Studies in the Sierra* and *The Mountains of California* translate measurements and specimens into prose that could move readers and lawmakers. His metaphors—cathedrals of stone, temples of trees—helped sacralize public lands without abandoning empirical description. This hybrid rhetoric matched Progressive Era reform, which relied on both expert knowledge and public sentiment to secure institutional change in park management and forest law.

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Sierra Foundations (MY FIRST SUMMER IN THE SIERRA; THE MOUNTAINS OF CALIFORNIA; STUDIES IN SIERRA; SNOW-STORM ON MOUNT SHASTA)

These works immerse the reader in the Sierra Nevada as Muir balances close scientific observation with a soaring sense of kinship to mountains, forests, and meadows. He traces how glaciers, weather, and seasonal rhythms shape granite landscapes, using storm, snow, and bloom as evidence for geological and ecological insight. The tone is rapturous yet precise, with episodes of high-country peril serving as field laboratories for a developing conservation ethic.

The Yosemite Cycle (THE YOSEMITE; THE TREASURES OF THE YOSEMITE; YOSEMITE GLACIERS; YOSEMITE IN WINTER; YOSEMITE IN SPRING; FEATURES OF THE PROPOSED YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK; A RIVAL OF THE YOSEMITE; THE HETCH HETCHY VALLEY)

This cluster forms Muir's most sustained portrait of Yosemite and kindred valleys across geology and season, from granite architecture and waterfalls to wildflower carpets and winter quiet. He explains glacial origins and compares rival splendors to underscore the case for protection, while proposing thoughtful park boundaries and stewardship. The voice blends lyrical celebration with policy-minded urgency, culminating in a vigorous defense of Hetch Hetchy as a twin treasure worthy of preservation.

National Parks Vision (OUR NATIONAL PARKS; THE NATIONAL PARKS AND FOREST RESERVATIONS; SAVE THE REDWOODS)

Here Muir scales up from single valleys to a national argument, portraying parks and forest reservations as scientific storehouses and public goods. He diagnoses threats, outlines management measures, and calls for enlarging protections, including safeguarding ancient redwood groves. The rhetoric is persuasive and forward-looking, marrying natural history with civic responsibility.

Alaska and the North Pacific (TRAVELS IN ALASKA; THE CRUISE OF THE CORWIN; STICKEEN: THE STORY OF A DOG)

These expeditionary narratives chart voyages among glaciers and rugged coasts, advancing Muir's ice-born interpretation of landscapes while relishing the hazards and revelations of northern weather. A companion dog's ordeal crystallizes the stark demands of the icefield into an intimate study of courage and trust, while an expedition account provides a wide-ranging natural history of remote shores. The mood is adventurous and contemplative, balancing risk with reverent observation.

Journeys Across America (A THOUSAND-MILE WALK TO THE GULF; STEEP TRAILS; THE GRAND CAÑON OF THE COLORADO)

From a long, botanical walk toward the Gulf to rugged western trail essays and a canyon meditation, these pieces map the breadth of American terrain and the human choices that shape it. Muir juxtaposes meticulous notes on plants, rocks, and aridity's sculptural power with critiques of waste

and praise for restraint. The tone is peripatetic and questioning, translating footpath discoveries into a broader ethic of national land care.

California Vistas Beyond the Sierra (PICTURESQUE CALIFORNIA)

This survey celebrates California's scenic richness, setting mountains alongside coasts, valleys, and other landmarks in vivid, accessible sketches. It complements the Sierra narratives by situating beauty within a statewide mosaic and inviting readers to see landscape as both art and living system. The mood is pictorial and invitational, designed to kindle admiration that ripens into stewardship.

Profiles and Commemorations (EDWARD HENRY HARRIMAN; EDWARD TAYLOR PARSONS)

These portraits commemorate conservation allies, tracing character, resolve, and public service as forces that move preservation from ideal to institution. Muir links individual example to collective outcomes, showing how leadership sustains parks, forests, and organizations dedicated to the commons. The tone is respectful and exhortative, using remembrance to encourage ongoing civic guardianship.

The Treasures of American Nature

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I. Peaks and Glaciers of the High Sierra

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Looking across the broad, level plain of the Sacramento and San Joaquin from the summit of the Coast Range opposite San Francisco, after the sky has been washed by the winter rains, the lofty Sierra may be seen throughout nearly its whole extent, stretching in simple grandeur along the edge of the plain, like an immense wall, four hundred miles long and two and a half miles high, colored in four horizontal bands; the lowest rose-purple of exquisite beauty of tone, the next higher dark purple, the next blue, and the highest pearl-white--all delicately interblending with each other and with the pale luminous sky and the golden yellow of the plain, and varying in tone with the time of day and the advance of the season.

The thousand landscapes of the Sierra are thus beheld in one view, massed into one sublime picture, and such is the marvelous purity of the atmosphere it seems as near and clear as a painting hung on a parlor wall. But nothing can you see or hear of all the happy life it holds, or of its lakes and meadows and lavish abundance of white falling water. The majestic range with all its treasures hidden stretches still and silent as the sunshine that covers it.

The rose-purple zone rising smoothly out of the yellow plain is the torrid foothill region, comprehending far the greater portion of the gold-bearing rocks of the range, and the towns mills, and ditches of the miners--a waving stretch of comparatively low, rounded hills and ridges, cut into sections by the main river canyons, roughened here and there with outcropping masses of red and grey slates, and rocky gold gulches rugged and riddled; the whole faintly

as communities that gather people around shared care for places. The profiles and policy essays reinforce one another, connecting personal influence with structural commitments. Companionship thus includes mentors, patrons, organizers, and fellow travelers whose efforts intersect with mountains, forests, and canyons. The social fabric grows visible as part of the natural story, not as distraction from it.

The Hetch Hetchy Valley, A Rival of the Yosemite, and The Treasures of the Yosemite treat valleys as communities of forms—meadows, domes, rivers, and groves—that flourish in relation. Yosemite in Winter and Yosemite in Spring extend the idea by revealing how differing cohorts thrive as conditions shift. Save the Redwoods adds another layer, attending to organisms that create living cathedrals and influence entire watersheds. Across these texts, companionship broadens to an ecological sense, where entities coexist and shape one another. The community portrayed becomes both social and biotic, a weave of beings and places sharing circumstance.

Question 5

How does widening geography reshape Muir's idea of American nature?

The Mountains of California, The Yosemite, and Studies in Sierra ground perception in granite country, where domes, canyons, and forests establish a grammar of forms. Yosemite in Winter and Yosemite in Spring vary this grammar by season, while Snow-Storm on Mount Shasta introduces volcanic height and weather drama. Picturesque California and The Treasures of the Yosemite assemble scenes as touchstones, emphasizing emblematic profiles and favored viewpoints. Within this California focus, terminology and attention refine around granitic processes,

conifer communities, and high-country water. The regional base becomes a laboratory for habits of seeing later carried across other parts of the continent.

Travels in Alaska expands the map to tidewater, archipelago, and icefields, where maritime climates and living glaciers reset expectations formed in Sierra granite. The Cruise of the Corwin adds shipboard scale and polar light, extending observation to sea ice and northern coasts. Stickeen: The Story of a Dog offers an intimate thread within this northern range, keeping perception agile amid crevasses and storms. These northern works invite comparison with California, revealing continuities in rock and ice while highlighting contrasts in forest types, weather, and access. The idea of American nature widens to include littoral geographies and high-latitude dynamics.

A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf directs attention southeastward, tracking river systems, coastal plains, and barrier shores distinctly unlike mountain basins. Steep Trails adds intermountain deserts and plateaus, where aridity, sage, and volcanic remnants complicate the earlier grammar. The Grand Cañon of the Colorado focuses on a southwestern chasm whose layered walls and carved temples assemble another architecture of grandeur. Taken together, these routes diversify the portfolio of forms and rhythms under consideration. The range of terrains enlarges the emphasis from singular marvels to a continental mosaic, inviting patterns and differences to be held in tandem.

Our National Parks and The National Parks and Forest Reservations convert geographic range into a frame for national belonging tied to places. Save the Redwoods brings old-growth coastal forests into that frame, balancing granite and desert with hypermaritime groves. Features of the Proposed Yosemite National Park and A Rival of the Yosemite

refine how a single valley fits within a broader inheritance. The widened geography thus feeds back into policy and portrayal, shaping an American nature composed of multiple provinces, each legible through careful attention, and all linked by the practice of describing, comparing, and conserving.

Memorable Quotes

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[1q](#) "for going to the mountains is going home."

[2q](#) "They are the priests of pines, and seem ever to be addressing the surrounding forest."

[3q](#) "one smooth, continuous bed of honey-bloom,"

[4q](#) "The tendency nowadays to wander in wildernesses is delightful to see."

[5q](#) "Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees."

[6q](#) "Going to the woods is going home; for I suppose we came from the woods originally."

[7q](#) "When California was wild, it was the floweriest part of the continent."

[8q](#) "Eating everything, never is he himself eaten except by man, and only man is an enemy to be feared."

[9q](#) "The Big Tree (*Sequoia gigantea*) is Nature's forest masterpiece, and, so far as I know, the greatest of living things."

[10q](#) "American forests! the glory of the world!"

[11q](#) "How fine the weather is! Nothing more celestial can I conceive."