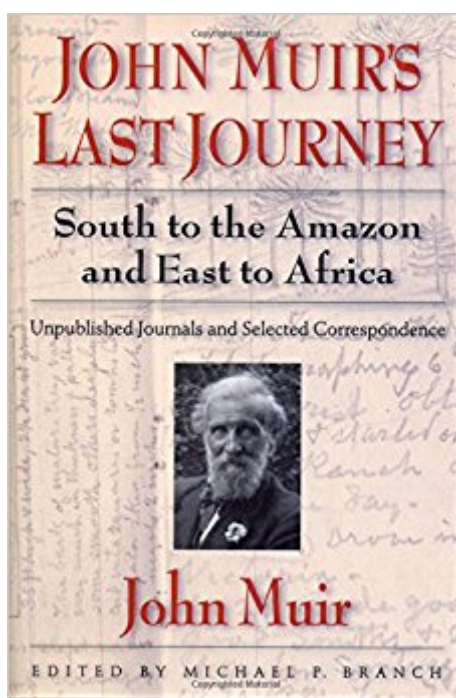


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John Muir's Last Journey: South To The And East To Africa: Unpublished Journals And Selected Correspondence (Pioneers Of Conservation)



Synopsis

"I am now writing up some notes, but when they will be ready for publication I do not know... It will be a long time before anything is arranged in book form." These words of John Muir, written in June 1912 to a friend, proved prophetic. The journals and notes to which the great naturalist and environmental figure was referring have languished, unpublished and virtually untouched, for nearly a century. Until now. Here edited and published for the first time, John Muir's travel journals from 1911-12, along with his associated correspondence, finally allow us to read in his own words the remarkable story of John Muir's last great journey. Leaving from Brooklyn, New York, in August 1911, John Muir, at the age of seventy-three and traveling alone, embarked on an eight-month, 40,000-mile voyage to South America and Africa. The 1911-12 journals and correspondence reproduced in this volume allow us to travel with him up the great , into the jungles of southern Brazil, to snowline in the Andes, through southern and central Africa to the headwaters of the Nile, and across six oceans and seas in order to reach the rare forests he had so long wished to study. Although this epic journey has received almost no attention from the many commentators on Muir's work, Muir himself considered it among the most important of his life and the fulfillment of a decades-long dream. John Muir's Last Journey provides a rare glimpse of a Muir whose interests as a naturalist, traveler, and conservationist extended well beyond the mountains of California. It also helps us to see John Muir as a different kind of hero, one whose endurance and intellectual curiosity carried him into far fields of adventure even as he aged, and as a private person and family man with genuine affections, ambitions, and fears, not just an iconic representative of American wilderness. With an introduction that sets Muir's trip in the context of his life and work, along with chapter introductions and a wealth of explanatory notes, the book adds important dimensions to our appreciation of one of America's greatest environmentalists. John Muir's Last Journey is a must reading for students and scholars of environmental history, American literature, natural history, and related fields, as well as for naturalists and armchair travelers everywhere.

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Customer Reviews

In August 1911, at the age of 73, John Muir embarked on an eight-month journey to South America and Africa to realize a lifelong dream. He was insistent on traveling alone, and concerned friends and family tried in vain to talk him out of going. Others hoped he would forget the notion altogether. "Have I forgotten the , Earth's greatest river?" he wrote to a concerned friend. "Never, never, never. It has been burning in me half a century, and will burn forever." Indeed, as early as the 1860s Muir had begun planning a trip to South America, and he could wait no longer. Arriving in South America via the Caribbean, he went a thousand miles up the , explored the Atlantic coast, and ventured into the Chilean Andes. He then sailed east and explored the jungles, forests, and plains of south and central Africa and the headwaters of the Nile at Lake Victoria before sailing back to New York via the Red Sea, Mediterranean Sea, and the North Atlantic--a 40,000-mile journey in all. Though best known for his conservation efforts in California and his creation of the Sierra Club, Muir considered his final journey the most rewarding, writing while in Africa in 1912 that "on this pair of wild hot continents I've enjoyed the most fruitful year of my life." These letters and journal entries further prove that his interests as a naturalist and conservationist extended to the entire world; he calls a section of the the "most interesting forest I have seen in my whole life" and refers to an experience with rare baobab trees in Africa as "one of the greatest of the great tree days of my lucky life." These writings, published for the first time here, also reveal a different side of Muir, one that editor Michael P. Branch believes is essential to achieving "a full understanding of his accomplishments as a person, writer, and naturalist." Branch explains that Muir's allegiance was not to California or even America, but to Earth, and his view of the planet as a single organism only strengthened as he matured: "The more I see of our goodly Godly star the more plainly comes to sight and mind the truth that it is all one like a face, every feature radiating beauty on the others," he wrote to a friend in 1911. Even in the twilight of his life, Muir never lost his spirit of adventure or sense of wonder for the natural world. --Shawn Carkonen

In 1911, at the age of 73 (just three years before he died), John Muir embarked alone on a 40,000-mile journey to South America and Africa, during which he kept extensive journals and wrote considerable correspondence none of which has been published until now. Edited by Muir scholar Michael P. Branch, associate professor of literature and environment at the University of Nevada, Reno, *John Muir's Last Journey: South to the Andes and East to Africa Unpublished Journals and Selected Correspondence* is a rich and fitting tribute. The revelation of Muir's aspirations as a world traveler and, in particular, his fascination with the Andes, asserts Branch, completes the understanding of a naturalist best known for his founding of the Sierra Club and his conservation efforts in the American West. B&w illus. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Muir's journals were good but I didn't care for the introduction to the journals in each chapter by the author. The intro's went into way to much background detail. I would have been fine with less intro.

Book arrived in good condition on schedule promised. Book was given as a gift to a dear friend, who has yet to report on his reading of the book.

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