



Fall/Winter2023

# The View

There is a love of wild nature in everybody, an ancient mother-love showing itself whether recognized or no, and however covered by cares and duties.  
- John Muir



The mission of the John Muir Association is to celebrate the life, share the vision, and preserve the legacy of John Muir through education, preservation, advocacy and stewardship, in partnership with the National Park Service at the John Muir National Historic Site.

## Rambling the John Muir Way

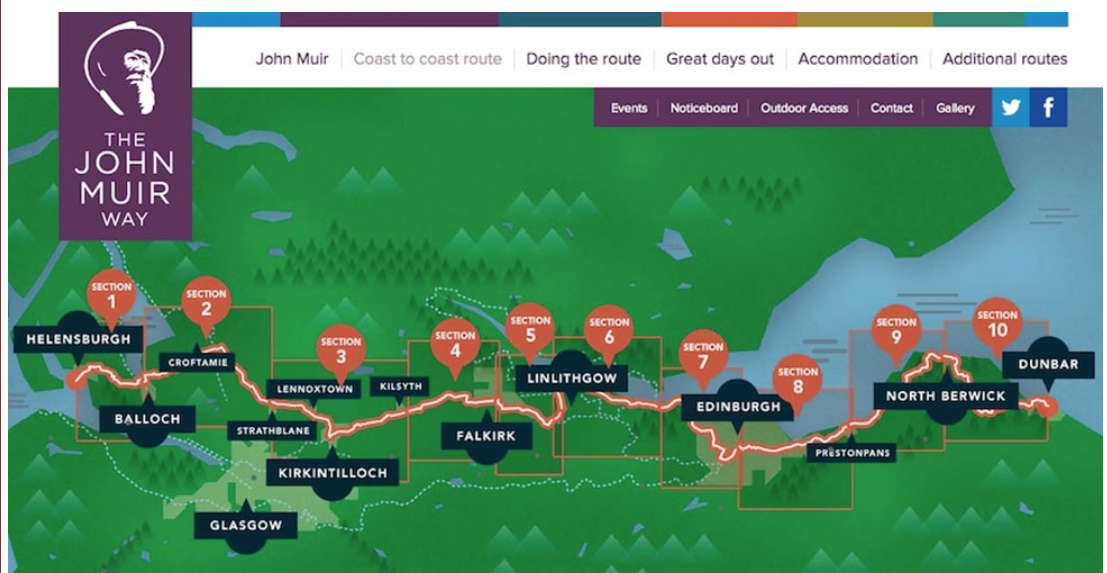
By Susan Garbarino, JMA Board Member

The John Muir Way is a 134-mile hiking/cycling trail that follows the route that John Muir took when he emigrated from Scotland to the United States in 1849. It begins in Dunbar, his birthplace, and winds along the coast to Helensburgh, a town on the Firth of Clyde where the family boarded a boat to the United States. The terrain is easy to moderate, divided into ten suggested sections. It can be completed in 9-11 days walking or 4-5 days biking. Of course, you can do any part of it as a day hike or multi day adventure!

The route passes through forests and towns, past estates and castles. Much of the trail is along the coast, with views of the Firth of Forth from clifftops and beaches. The trail goes through Scotland's first National Park; Loch Lomond & The Trossachs <https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/>. There are even some Roman sites along the way. You can find a map of the route along with highlights of things to do and places to stay along the way here <http://johnmuirway.org>.

The concept of the John Muir Way began in 2010 and was completed in 2014 in celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Muir's death. It was created as part of the Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN). Funders included NatureScot, Sustrans, SportsScotland, the Forestry Commission Europe (SRDP), Creative Scotland, local governments and the Green Acton Trust.

Don't forget your raingear! Though you may have to endure a few squalls on your journey, there's always a nice café or pub just a few steps down the road.





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## Introducing the JMHS Supervisory Ranger

By Wendy Solis, JMHS Supervisory Ranger

My name is Wendy Solis and I've been fortunate to work as a Supervisory Park Ranger with a highly skilled and motivated team at the John Muir National Historic Site since November 2022. I began working for National Park Service (NPS) about 10 years ago, and most of that time was spent on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. Working at the John Muir National Historic Site was always a dream of mine. I grew up in Shore Acres near West Pittsburg that is now known as Bay Point. My elementary school was near the site of where the Port Chicago explosion occurred in 1944. I then went to Mt. Diablo High School, the oldest school in the district. Living in these locations and attending these schools spurred my interest in science and history. In college, I learned about conservation, the environmental movement, and the importance of documenting change caused by humans. While working on Alcatraz Island, I realized that I wanted to know more about changes in my own area and how people were affected by the tragedies that took place locally.



While working on Alcatraz, I developed a deeper appreciation of western Contra Costa County history, the history of the Bay Area, and the resiliency of Indigenous People. I realized that John Muir was responsible for promoting the idea of protecting special places like Yosemite Valley for future generations. I knew then that I wanted to play a direct role by working for NPS at the John Muir National Historic Site.

The park visitors we've greeted these last few years vary from locals who've seen the house from the road but never stopped by, to people planning on visiting John Muir's birthplace, to people beginning their road trip to National Parks throughout the country.

We're very lucky to greet all of these visitors and offer them different ways to learn about a unique man, a family, a town, and an agency. We're very fortunate to have this gem in our own backyard. This site is free and open every day of the year except Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, and New Year's. It is rewarding to know that local citizens realize the importance of John Muir and the value of outdoor spaces. Part of our job as park interpreters is to share that knowledge and resources with as many visitors as possible.

I enjoy being part of a team who utilizes the historical aspects of the John Muir Site to tell so many stories. This year, post-covid, we were able to again offer formal house tours, grave site tours, Mt Wanda hikes (full moon, wildflower, songbirds, nature hikes), campfire programs, school fieldtrips, and presentations off site. We've inspired local youths to complete their scout projects with us. We have increased the number of local residents interested in volunteering and have hosted various Bay Area hiking groups. Our goal with each visitor is for them to find their story within our park, connect with the resources, and leave with new knowledge and a fulfilling experience.

One of my favorite John Muir quotes follows:

*"Another glorious day, the air as delicious to the lungs as nectar to the tongue."*+



## John Muir Visitor Center Native Garden

By Elaine Jackson, Friends of Alhambra Creek

Lucy Lawliss, Superintendent at the John Muir Historic Site in 2007, approached our California Native Plant Society (CNPS) table during the Ranch Days celebration. She talked about creating a native garden in front of the National Park Service (NPS) Visitor Center. She realized that the existing garden of non-native plants didn't reflect the biodiversity of California native plants that John Muir loved. We all agreed that her idea was great. We partnered with Friends of Alhambra Creek (FOAC) and others to get the garden started. Greg Wolford, Native Landscape Designer, was brought on board to design and plant the garden. Most of his original plantings are still thriving today.



In 2012, a Boy Scouts of America Eagle Scout candidate came to NPS as he needed a project. He approached Horticulturist/Arborist, Ranger Keith Park. Keith knew that he and FOAC wanted to extend the native garden along the side of the Visitor Center along Alhambra Avenue. The Boy Scouts took this project on under the direction of Keith Park and FOAC volunteers that suggested native plants for the expansion.



The project began with removal of thirsty turf grass along with layers of landscape fabric that were choking the soil. It was a challenge but the Scouts persevered. They planted many beneficial native plants and laid a stone path through this new section of the garden. Today, FOAC garden volunteers, California Native Plant Society (CNPS), and community folks, continue to maintain the garden on a weekly basis. They add native plants that you will find when you hike our East Bay hills. These plants include: *Asclepias speciosa*

(Showy Milkweed),  
and *A. fascicularis*

(Narrow Leaf Milkweed) to benefit monarch butterflies that only lay their eggs on milkweed and *Perideridia kelloggii* (Yampah) for the Anise Swallowtail butterflies to lay their eggs on. Native plants provide food and shelter for birds and insects and we hope that you will propagate similar native plants in your own gardens. Native plants are drought tolerant and require less water in our hot/dry summers.



In Martinez, follow the "Alhambra Native Plant Trail." The trail is a series of gardens that stretch from the Amtrak Station to the John Muir Historic Garden that was created in 2010. Look for an article about the "Trail" in Alhambra Native Plant Trail Map by FOAC member, Doug Burgess.

For a list of most of the plants in the NPS native garden, please see this list: <https://bit.ly/45iY7mU>



## The View from the President's Desk

By Mark Thomson, President, John Muir Association.

Greetings from the John Muir Association!

I just returned from a camping trip at Silver Lake in the Sierra Nevada. There is nothing like walking through the forest amidst massive granite boulders, late season wildflowers, and towering trees to know that John Muir had the right idea on where to spend time. Blessed by a wet year, the mountains are particularly lush and beautiful this year.

After a long break during Covid, the John Muir Association (JMA) is back in full swing. We had some trepidation about re-starting our programs after a three-year hiatus, but thankfully everything fell into place.

On a beautiful Saturday last April, our John Muir Birthday/Earth Day event had the same wonderful feel that was present in years past. Over 2000 visitors showed up and helped us celebrate. We had over forty exhibitors from local environmental organizations represented at booths, excellent music throughout the day, and John Muir (aka Frank Helling) roamed his land telling stories. We are already making plans for Birthday/Earth Day for next year - put Saturday April 20, 2024 on your calendar.

JMA awarded four Conservation Awards for 2022 and the awards were presented by representatives from Congress, the California State Senate, East Bay Regional Park District and the City of Martinez to the award winners. Check out our website – we are ready for nominations for 2023. The due date is January 2024.

We also had a rousing success with Mountain Day Camp. As time marches on, changes happen. Jill Harcke has been Camp Director at every day of camp since it started over 20 years ago. I can't tell you how much I value Jill's knowledge and friendship. Jill – thank you for all you have done for Mountain Day Camp! This year, Jill began to turn over the reins to the next set of hands. We were fortunate to have the Art & Wilderness Institute from Southern California lead camp this year. They stepped in and put on two full weeks of camp carrying on with Jill's enthusiasm while throwing in some new ideas and new ways of doing things. We look forward to working with staff from Art & Wilderness Institute again next year. Just like the John Muir Birthday/Earth Day event, planning is already underway for 2024. Camp dates in 2024 will be July 15-19 and July 22-26. Registration will open in December 2023.

Thanks for your interest in John Muir. Email us at [jma@johnmuirassociation.org](mailto:jma@johnmuirassociation.org). We would love to hear comments and suggestions from you.



## John Muir Conservation Award Goes International

By Susan Grabarino, JMA Board Member

In July, JMA Board member, Susan Garbarino, traveled to Glasgow, Scotland to deliver the John Muir Association's annual "Conservation Award to a Non-profit Organization" to Toby Clark, John Muir Award, Scotland Manager (see picture below). The Board had presented the award to the John Muir Trust at Birthday/Earth Day on April 22, 2023.

The John Muir Trust (JMT) <https://www.johnmuirtrust.org/> is a land trust, similar to the Nature Conservancy. Celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, the JMT owns many properties in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland including Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in Britain. All of this land will be preserved as wild space and managed to support natural ecosystems. John Muir would be pleased.



*(continued on page 5)*



## John Muir Conservation Award Goes International

*(continued from page 4)*

In addition to its land trust work, the JMT runs the John Muir Award; an inclusive, non-competitive award program completed by thousands of people each year; primarily school children throughout the United Kingdom. This program shares Muir's love of nature with new generations, encouraging everyone to connect with nature in their own way.

By giving the Conservation Award to the John Muir Trust, the JMA seeks to celebrate the lasting legacy of John Muir in his home country and recognize the JMT's significant contributions to conservation throughout Scotland. The award also includes certificates from Martinez's two members of Congress and the California State Senator for Martinez. Thanks to the Board for making this international connection with other fans of Muir's work!

## Enjoy These Images From the 2023 John Muir Mountain Day Camp!





## John Muir Association Partner Spotlight and Introduction

By Lindsey A. Smith, Park Store Manager, WNPA

Since 1938, Western National Parks Association (WNPA) has partnered with the National Park Service (NPS) to help offer fun, meaningful, and educational products in their park stores and online at [store.wnpa.org](http://store.wnpa.org). Every purchase supports parks and helps fulfill our mission to support education, research, and community engagement. As the second largest nonprofit cooperating association to the National Park Service, WNPA now supports 70+ park sites across 12 western states.



I have been with WNPA since November of 2021 as the Park Store Manager of both John Muir National Historic Site (NHS) and Eugene O'Neill NHS. Prior to this, I was a long-time volunteer at John Muir Historic Site as well as an employee with the John Muir Association (JMA) as a camp counselor for the 2019 Mountain Day Camp. In addition, I spent 12 months as an Interpretive Park Ranger with NPS during the pandemic. I have lived in Martinez for 20 years, own a townhouse minutes from the park and have a 15-year-old daughter who just started high school right down the street.



My local ties, knowledge of the area, and passion for public lands make working for WNPA easy and very rewarding. I always appreciate a good gift shop when I'm out traveling, and I really enjoy being able to provide that same experience to our park guests. Their park experience begins in our Visitor Center, and my shop becomes a big part of their first impression! I take careful thought and consideration of each new item brought in to the store, making sure the merchandise sold in our stores has meaningful ties to the history of the site. I believe that every purchase is a chance to make a memory by enhancing the visitor's experience, understanding, and appreciation of national parks.

## JMA Call for New Board Members

The goals of the John Muir Association are to celebrate the life, share the vision, and preserve the legacy of John Muir. We accomplish this through education and advocacy of John Muir's values in partnership with the National Park Service utilizing the John Muir National Historic Site in Martinez, California as a focal point. This house was the home of John Muir for the last 24 years of his life.

JMA is looking for one or two new Board members to help us continue our current annual events (John Muir Birthday-Earth Day; Mountain Day Camp; Muir Conservation Awards; and the Muir Native Garden) and to expand our work in the areas of grant writing, use of social media; increasing membership; and developing new events.

We are a volunteer Board and expect Board members to:

- Commit to the goals of the organization
- Attend monthly Board meetings that last approximately two hours
- Participate on one major JMA Committee
- Advocate for JMA in the community
- Become a member of JMA and renew annually
- Agree to serve on the Board for a minimum of two years

We work together as a group to expand our impact on the local and regional community. Please send your letter of interest for consideration via email by October 31, 2023 to: [jma@johnmuirassociation.org](mailto:jma@johnmuirassociation.org). The Board will meet with prospective candidates.



## Call for Nominees for 2023 John Muir Conservation Awards

For the 45th consecutive year, the John Muir Association will present our annual John Muir Conservation Awards at our Birthday / Earth Day event in 2024.

The John Muir Association supports the National Park Service in sustaining the John Muir National Historic Site as a center for education, inspiration, and advocacy of the legacy of John Muir.

Each year since 1978, the John Muir Association has honored those who continue John Muir's legacy of environmental preservation. The winners of these awards over those years have included conservation groups, governmental agencies, select individuals of all ages, and local businesses. The point is, everyone – people, groups, and companies – can contribute to conservation efforts, and we want to showcase those who are committed to conservation.



Do you know of a business that strives to ensure that its operation uses energy and resources in a sustainable fashion? Do you know of a community group that has conservation initiatives that help keep our planet, and its wild areas, healthy? Do you know of some individuals who are devoted to conservation, and educating others about the principles of conservation?



Chances are you do, and often these organizations and people are more concerned about conservation than getting awards, but we think they deserve some recognition.

Nomination forms can be found at <https://www.johnmuirassociation.org/php/conserv-award-submitnom.php>.

There are links at the bottom of that page in both pdf and Word formats. Entries must be received by January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024. You can choose to nominate anyone you feel is worthy, and you can nominate your own business or organization if you like. Questions? Contact the John Muir Association by email: [jma@johnmuirassociation.org](mailto:jma@johnmuirassociation.org)

## Support the John Muir Association

Ever read this newsletter, or attend a JMA Birthday– Earth Day Celebration event and wonder “Gosh, those folks have so much fun and it’s all for such worthy cause! How could I join in the fun?”

It’s easy and it is important! We always need volunteers and membership donations are extremely important to support our efforts.

Two easy ways to learn more:

- 1) Go to [www.johnmuirassociation.org/php/join.php](http://www.johnmuirassociation.org/php/join.php)
- 2) Email us at [jma@johnmuirassociation.org](mailto:jma@johnmuirassociation.org)





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## Upcoming Events



### John Muir Birthday - Earth Day Celebration

Saturday, April 20, 2024  
10 am to 4 pm

Family Fun all day!  
Don't miss it!

### 2024 John Muir Mountain Day Camp

July 15-19 and July 22-26  
See [www.johnmuirassociation.org](http://www.johnmuirassociation.org)  
for more details

