

1# Muir Woods Restoration

Sitting here in Muir Woods, it's sometimes easy to forget that you are but a few feet from the bustle of Bascom Hill—at the center of a mostly urban university campus. Take a moment to let the hum of city life drift into the background as you focus on the natural setting around you.

Perhaps a cool breeze is blowing off the lake, just down the hill. Maybe, if you are here in the early spring, before the trees leaf out, you'll be treated to a brief display of ephemeral wildflowers like trout lily, trilliums, and bloodroot.

Nearly 150 years ago these woods would have been visited by a young student whose curiosity for the natural world would take him across the globe in a peripatetic romp. That student, John Muir, who would later go on to help inspire the development of our nation's first national parks, lived just across the road, in North Hall.

It is said that Muir often visited these woods and the shores of Lake Mendota in a quest to discover all that he could about his surroundings. Many stories have been written about his dorm room which was renowned as something of a natural history museum—with plant and animal specimens strewn about from his botanizing jaunts.

Today these woods, now named in honor of Muir, continue to draw visitors in search of new knowledge or inspiration. Countless classes and student researchers traverse these woods each year. Some work on ecological restoration projects—looking for ways to return the plant communities here back to an assemblage that more closely reflects what existed before the onslaught of exotic species like buckthorn and garlic mustard.

Other students may come to these woods to quietly reflect and compose poetry or seek inspiration for an art project. Yet other visitors enjoy a little respite from their busy lives. Whatever the reason it is important to remember that the rich living and learning experience that makes a university campus such a vital place is only enhanced by access to natural places. A campus is not only defined by what goes on inside the classrooms and laboratories—but is linked to the landscapes that re-connect us to the world beyond.

Learn more about Muir and the Preserve by visiting our website. And be sure to visit the other stops on our audio tour by checking the information kiosk at the bottom of this path. Happy trails.