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Picture Books

John Muir: America's Naturalist
Thomas Locker
Fulcrum Publishing
978-1-55591-393-9
(May 27, 2003)

A tiny man gazes up, wonderstruck, at the vast heights of a redwood forest. Amid lush red-browns, greens, and blues, a tinier bear stands some distance away, oblivious to the human intruder in his realm. This is the cover of a book designed to appeal to both parents and children-to the former, because of its message conveyed in simple and eloquent terms, and to the latter, because of the beauty and imagination contained within its images.

Children's books can capture the minds and hearts of potential young conservationists, and this book is a prime example, thanks to its enchanting illustrations and judicious quotes from conservationist Muir that are sprinkled throughout the book.

The author-illustrator, after a successful career as a painter, turned his attention to children's books, in the hopes of passing on to young people his profound respect and love for nature. Here, his paintings offer a view rich in color and magnificence. His paintings of glaciers, forests, Yosemite, and tranquil farmland show a world adults too often forget, in colors that capture the eye and sing to the heart. Whether the rich blue of a starry night sky over a glacier, the greeny-gray of a squall sky at sea, or the deep green of branches in which Muir experienced the fierce winds of a Yosemite storm, Locker's images are bold and magical. He captures well the sense of wonder Muir must have felt in his wild and pristine surroundings, as well as the scale of man against the vastness of nature.

The text, easy for young readers, is presented in white on pages of rich solid colors. It tells Muir's own story and his crusade on behalf of the natural world in simple terms, yet Muir's own texts and the beauty of the illustrations will offer older readers lots of interest.

?We all travel the Milky Way together, trees and men,? said Muir, and children have a fine guide to this corner of the universe in Locker's book.

Marlene Satter