



## Muir Inspires Students in the French Pyrenees

By Susan Garbarino

**D**ominique Marabese, Secondary School teacher in Tarbes, France, has integrated Muir's writings and legacy into her curriculum since 2007 for her students; engaging them to understand his work and read his writings.

Dominique promotes ecological activities throughout her school. Each year, she organizes different activities to celebrate John Muir's birthday in April (sound familiar?). This year she organized two webinars with Alexis Jenni, author of the first French biography of John Muir, *J'aurais pu devenir millionnaire, j'ai choisi d'être vagabond* (I could have become a millionaire, I chose to be a vagabond), published in 2020.

It was by working in Scotland in 1990 that Dominique discovered Muir. She has been a member of the John Muir Trust (Glasgow, 2022 JMA Conservation Award winner) since 2011 and has collaborated with the John Muir Birthplace in Dunbar, Scotland.

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Pyrenees National Park in 2007, Dominique began including Muir's role in founding the US National Parks in her own teaching. In 2010, her students were

*Dear John Muir,  
I'm going to give you some news from 21st century planet Earth. The temperature has increased a lot. Global warming created by the greenhouse effect makes the ice caps melt in the oceans? Consequently, the sea level is rising.*

*Now the climate is strange because global warming changes the seasons. These environmental problems and the pollution kill a lot of animals and some species are now extinct.*

*I'm worried about all this because my life is going to change in the future. Maybe I will have to leave my home or my country.*

*In my school, I am an ecodelegate and we planted trees on March 5th.*

*The John Muir Trust is a Scottish association named after you. Its methods (the John Muir Award) encourage us to protect wildlife, discover new things and share what we have learnt and done.*

*All actions are important no matter how small. You have achieved great things and showed that a single person can have a great influence on the world. Thanks for teaching that.*

—Aydon

*Dear Mr. Muir,  
I hope you're doing well. I'm a French student. I just wanted to tell you that I admire you a lot! You are a real figure to me because of what you have done for sequoias and Yosemite Valley.*

*You know, things have really changed now. It's horrible!  
You know that the scientists say that in 2050, there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish?!  
And let's talk about forests in Australia! A lots of them have burnt. Our planet is really going bad...*

*Do you know how I got to know about you? Well, during the English class, my teacher made us read your biography and I was impressed. In English too, we also learnt that some people were trying to find solutions to today's environmental issues.*

*There are individual actions we can take to reduce our carbon footprint. I only eat seasonal local food for example. I'm not perfect but I am trying to change my ways and when I am older, I will take part to some beach cleaning and buy trees to plant them.*

*Your life has really inspired me and given me the motivations to yearn for a better life. I will do everything I can to improve my life. So, I thank you for that and for the heritage you left.*

—Lamyae

able to visit the Pyrenees National Park with a guide who had also visited Yosemite and Yellowstone.

In 2016 her students created an exhibit (done jointly with the John Muir Birthplace) entitled *At the Origin of National Parks...History and Heritage of the First American National Parks...* The exhibit was chosen to be displayed in the Pyrenees National Park's Gavarnie Maison du Parc in 2018. There's a lovely article about it on the John Muir's Birthplace blog, <https://www.jmbt.org.uk/2019/03/21/john-muir-in-the-french-pyrenees/>. This year, Dominique asked her students to write letters to John Muir about what is happening to the natural environment in 2024. Shown here are two examples.

Congratulations on your years of work, Madame Marabese! It's wonderful to learn about how Muir's legacy is so widely known and is still influencing young people around the world.