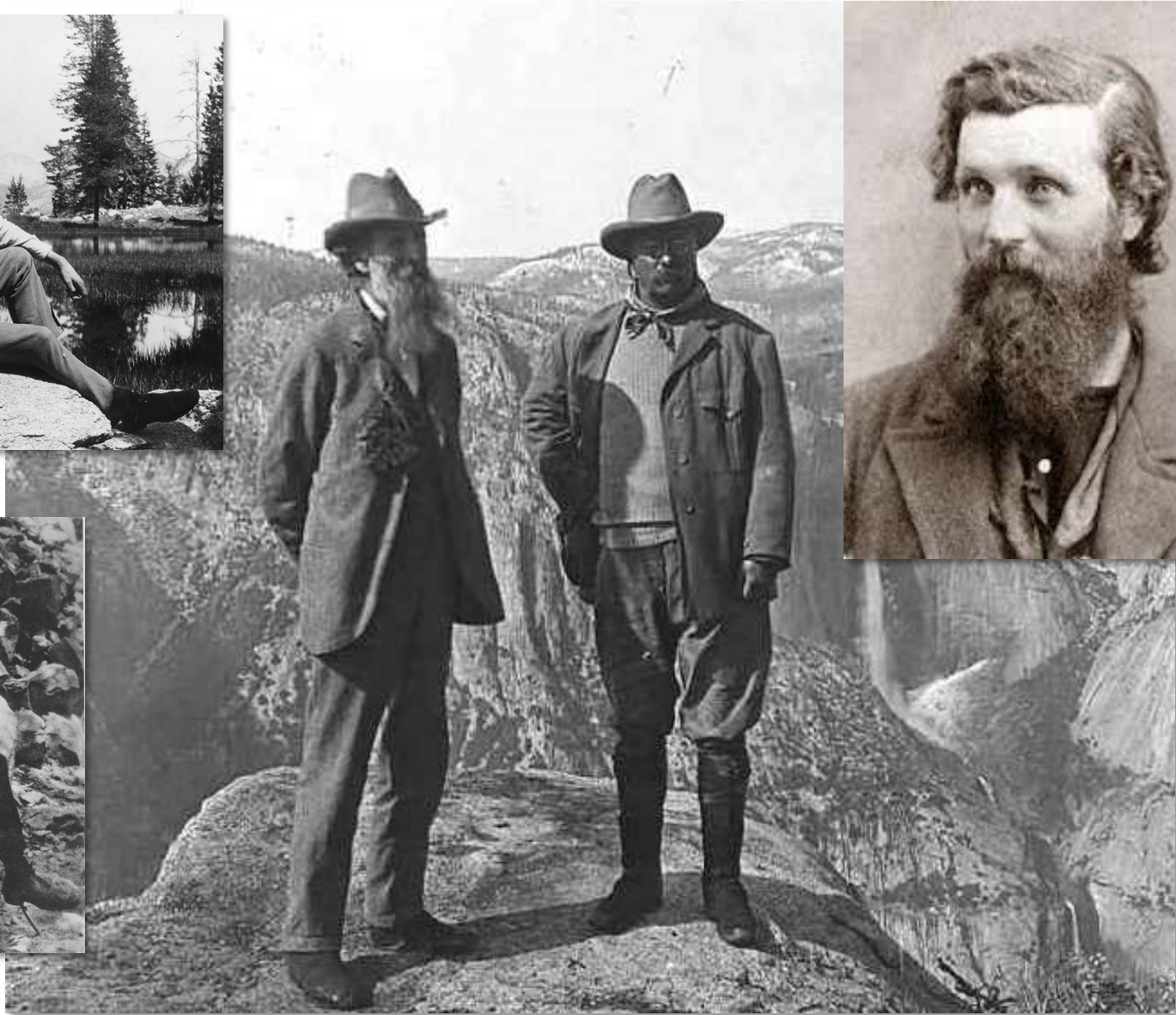
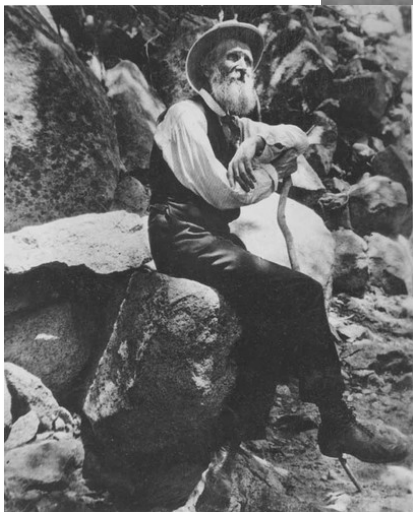
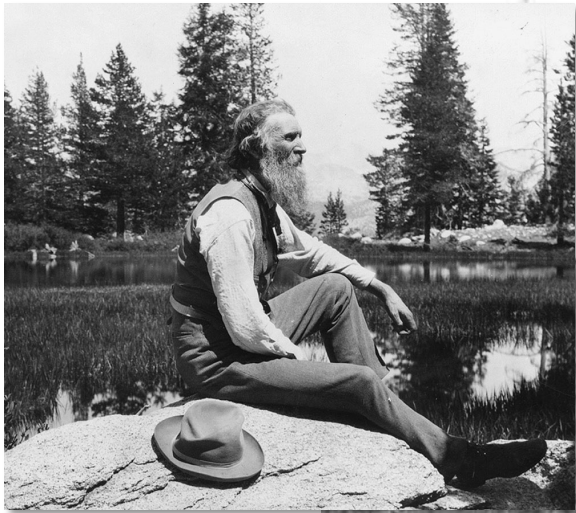


# John Muir Day — April 21, 2017



# Social Ecology

# Social Ecology



Murray Bookchin  
(1921-2006)

Bookchin was an American anarchist and libertarian socialist who wrote often about the growing importance of how human beings are adversely affecting the natural environment. In 1974 he helped found the **Institute for Social Ecology** in Vermont.

Bookchin's criticism of deep ecology began with his keynote address at the 1987 inaugural conference of the U.S. Green Party. The following comes from his 1988 "Social Ecology vs Deep Ecology."

# Social Ecology

Moving from **Environmentalism** ...

(the “Earth Day approach toward engineering nature so that we can ravage nature with minimal effects on ourselves”)

... to **Ecological Philosophy**

(based in the study of systemic relationships between living organisms, including human beings, and their environment)

But which kind of ecologic movement?

Two emerging kinds of ecological thinking:

**Deep Ecology** and **Social Ecology**.

# Problems with Deep Ecology

- (1) **Ignores differences between humans and other species** (humans are just one species among many)
- (2) **Ignores social differences between humans** (all humans are equally culpable)
- (3) **Malthusian** (too many humans!)
- (4) **Cheapens ecology** (mysticism over scientific rigor)
- (5) **Loss of individuals** (we all become one-self)

# What is Social Ecology?

- (1) **Social**: locates the problems and the solutions to the environmental crisis in how we organize ourselves socially.
- (2) **Rational**: not mystical or spiritual
- (3) **Natural**: looks to ecological science (not to sky gods or wood sprites)
- (4) **Humanistic**: sees humans as part of nature and also as a special part of nature

## Our Place in Nature

“Philosophically, deep ecology and social ecology rest on **very different assumptions about what constitutes nature and humanity’s place in the natural world.**”

“Deep ecology is basically a wilderness movement that rejects almost any kind of human stewardship insofar as human beings make use of nonhuman nature for human ends beyond the satisfaction of ‘vital needs’.”

[from Bookchin’s 1989 letter to *Alternatives*]