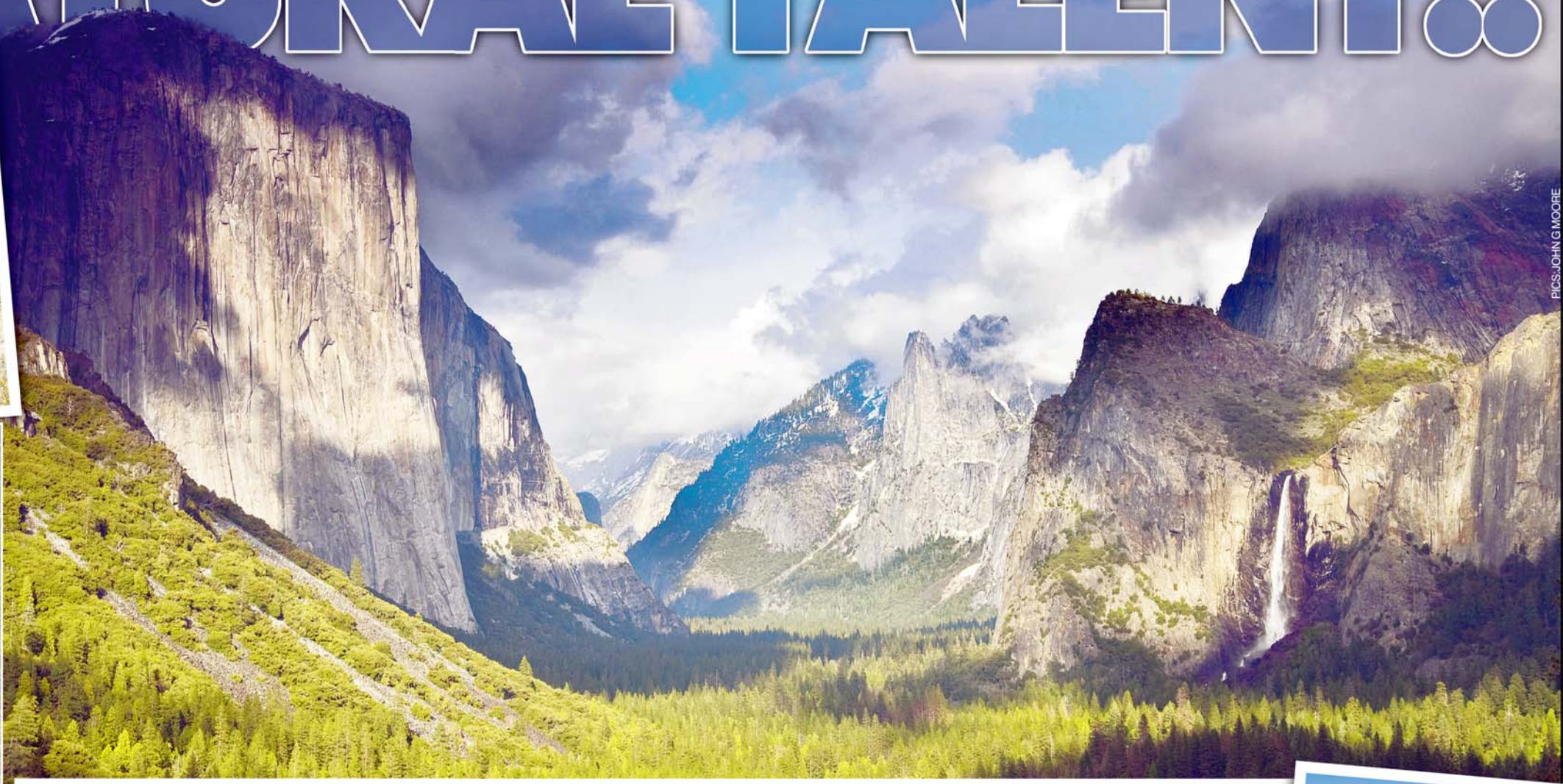
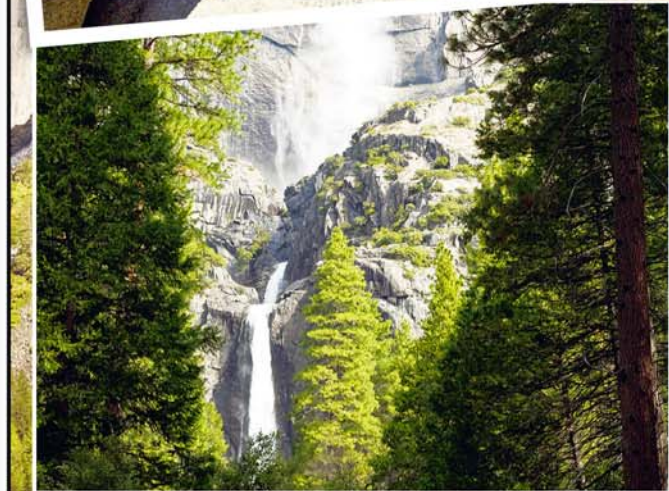
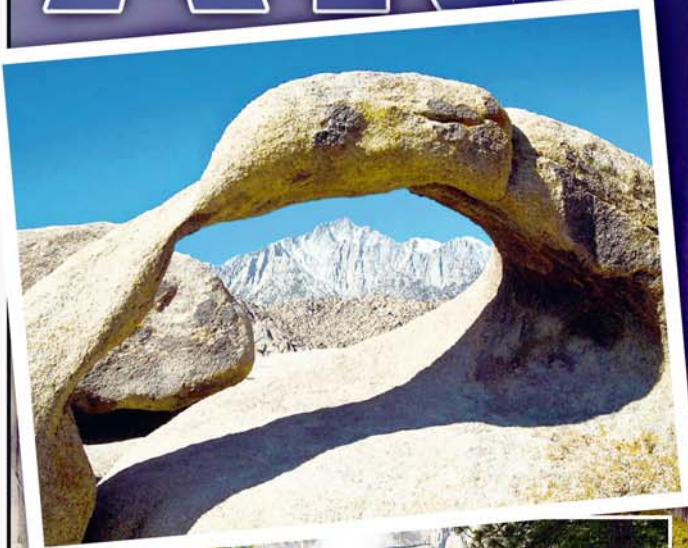


A NATURAL TALENT ∞



PICS: JOHN MOORE

HITTING NEW HEIGHTS: After seeing John Muir's photographs of Yosemite Valley in California, John Moore was driven to visit the area and take these breathtaking shots



SNAP HAPPY: Glaswegian John Moore, right, was inspired by John Muir, above

REVERED in the USA as one of the world's first pioneers of conservation, John Muir is less well known in his native Scotland.

But that could be about to change thanks to a remarkable idea by Glaswegian photographer John Moore. "I first came across John Muir when I was working on projects in California," said John.

"He was America's most famous naturalist and conservationist, yet few people in Scotland outside his native Dunbar seem to know just how influential he was.

"This is maybe changing now, but he is still not as well known as he should be." One of eight children, John Muir was born in Dunbar, East Lothian, in 1838 and his family emigrated to the United States in search of a better life when he was 11.

Muir eventually became one of the founding fathers of the conservation movement and it is largely thanks to him that the awe-inspiring beauty of Yosemite Valley in California has been preserved as a national park.

In 2006, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger inducted Muir

Photographer focuses on the Scot expat who became a famous American conservationist

By Nan Spowart
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into the California Hall of Fame. His interest sparked, Moore decided to visit Yosemite and the Sierra Nevada mountains for himself and was knocked out by the scenery. He said: "It's a phenomenal landscape, really special, and I felt compelled to capture it."

It was while he was taking his initial photographs that Moore considered the possibility of using them to benefit others. He decided that over a three-week period, he would walk the 211-mile John Muir Trail from Yosemite to Mt Whitney, and then produce a fine art landscape photography book.

The proceeds will be donated to three charities, one of which is run by John Muir's great-grandson, Michael.

Although he makes his living from commercial, music and fashion photography, Moore has a passion for the outdoors, even though in grew up in the

more industrial area of Cambuslang, near Glasgow.

"My dad worked in the steel works, my mum worked in the Hoover factory, and the area at that time was very industrial," he recalled. "However, we lived just on the south-east edge of the city and the green belt was only streets away."

"From my primary school, you could see across Glasgow to the Campsie Fells and Ben Lomond. So right from the start,

something quite awe-inspiring about being up in the mountains, taking in the beauty around you.

"People get caught up in the rush of modern living, but a trip into the wild spaces gives you a real sense of perspective about who you are, and where your place in life is."

"That is why John Muir's message is so important. He profoundly believed that preserving areas of natural beauty also

can handle it, although he will be walking at high altitude.

With the exception of the first nine miles, the trail seldom dips below 8000ft (2400m) and goes as high as 13,153ft (4009m) - three times the height of Ben Nevis.

"The climate is good and the paths are well defined. It's not like in the Highlands, where you might find yourself wading knee deep through a peat bog in the pouring rain," Moore explained.

He is more concerned about the local wildlife than his fitness, however. "I am predominantly going to be taking pictures at dawn and dusk when bears and wild cats are at their most active, so I'll need to keep one eye on what's behind me."

"It's a bit different from the midgets at home," he laughed.

He agrees that many photographers have already been inspired by this area, the most well-known being Ansel Adams, but Moore believes he can offer something different. "I want to portray Yosemite and the High Sierras as I see it," he said. "You can have numerous

'John believed that preserving areas of natural beauty nurtured the human spirit'

that gave me a sense of perspective and there was always a sense of a bigger world beyond where you were growing up."

Moore was also lucky enough to have an uncle who would take him for hill walks in the north-west of Scotland.

"I always loved our walks and it had a strong influence on me," he said. "There is

nurtured the human spirit. That message is as valid today as it was then."

There is a lot of interest in Moore's project and he is already involved in discussions with the BBC regarding TV, radio and online coverage.

He plans to do the walk next month and, being reasonably fit, is confident that he

photographers at the same place at the same time, and everyone's shots will be different." Indeed, Moore's stunning landscape work has already been compared with Adams, which he says is "incredibly humbling".

"I have never aspired to emulate my peers, but if people are kind enough to make a comparison with such exalted company then that's great," he said.

Like Adams, Moore started taking pictures at a young age with a box brownie his grandfather gave him when he was five. He said: "Photography's always been my passion. Even in my teens it became a joke with my mates because my camera came almost everywhere with me."

Fittingly, the charities he hopes to raise money for are the John Muir Trust, the Sierra Club Conservation Trust, and Action Adventure, who provide disabled people access to the wilderness.

His aim is to raise a significant sum for the charities through book sales, but he's still looking for some sponsors.

He said: "There is a lot involved in bringing the project to completion and I hope to raise most of this through corporate sponsorship."

Anyone interested in supporting the project and the charities involved should visit the website at www.johnmooretrail.com

MIRROR IMAGE: Yosemite

