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## Amelia's Detour

Polly Brown

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## Amelia's Detour

*with thanks to Dave Anderson, Patty Fernandez, and Carl Safina*

She's called Amelia, this albatross  
they've fitted with a transmitter  
to help them track her foraging, far  
from the speck of land where her chick  
grows fast, perpetually hungry.

From these tropical waters—  
azure, dazzling, unfruitful—  
Amelia and her mate feed their chick  
by starving themselves. Flying fish,  
fish eggs; none of it enough,

until, carved lighter and lighter,  
she feels one day—mid-foray—a shift;  
hears in her blood a whisper  
out of many lives, many ends,  
to say her death will gain the chick nothing.

Then, poised on an eight-foot wingspan  
she turns, flies hard, straight north  
a thousand miles. The trackers' maps  
let us arrive with her at cold water  
green with oxygen and plankton;

waves roiling with squid. At last,  
she spears survival with her beak, swallows  
again, again, filling into herself.

Nearly a week before she beelines south—  
no way to know if her mate's been tending

the store—but yes, their chick lives,  
rushes Amelia open-mawed for a share  
from her detour. He lives, and will need  
more. Minutes later, aloft again,  
she's studying the ocean swells for signs.

*Polly Brown*

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POLLY BROWN, of the Boston-area Every Other Thursday Poets, has two chapbooks, *Blue Heron Stone* and *Each Thing Torn from Any of Us*. She has written about war and peace at the University of Massachusetts Boston's Joiner Institute and has organized *plein air* poetry events on her Massachusetts hillside.

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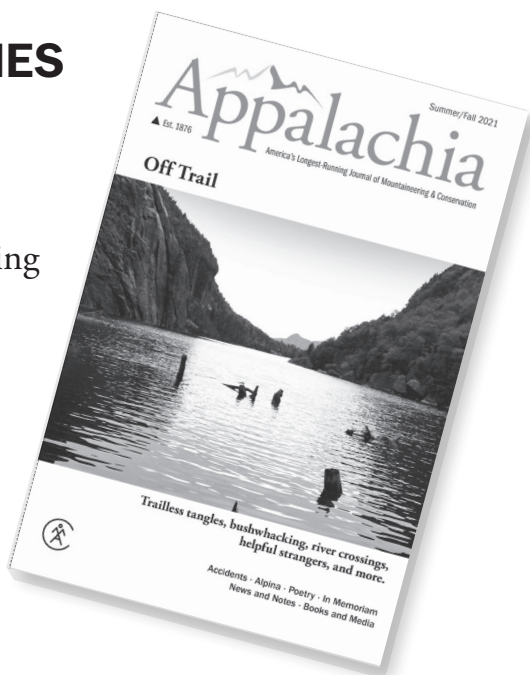
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