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## The Nisqually Delta

Kay Mullen

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## The Nisqually Delta

spreads for miles. Along a shaggy stream  
red maples, salal and broom sedge  
thicken. A doe savors sweetness of still-green  
leaves, fruit of blackberry vines that bend  
among bracken. A boardwalk navigates  
hikers across low tidal flats where the waterway

opens to a heron's cautious prints embossing  
the morning sand. The poised bird stares  
at its reflection, awaits the quick splash,  
the flapping tail when the yellow beak stabs.

In the distance, along shallow inlets, egrets  
wear patience like a promise.  
Overhead a whirling dervish of swallows  
circles and sweeps. Clouds set a blue  
table of random striations, a feast in their chaotic

wild. Still further along the boardwalk,  
receding water oozes colored stones,  
empty clamshells. Lacy leaf scraps overlay  
moss-covered reeds, bramble rags.  
Intangible gift of touches, miles  
of surface treasures teased out in this vast  
and Lilliputian leeway of the world.

*Kay Mullen*

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KAY MULLEN'S work has appeared in a variety of poetry journals and anthologies. She has received the William Stafford Award from Washington State Poets in 2002 and has authored three full-length poetry collections: *Let Morning Begin* (Caritas Communications, 2001), *A Long Remembering: Return to Vietnam* (Foothills Publishing, 2006), and her latest, *Even the Stones* (Caritas Communications, 2012). She lives and teaches in Tacoma, Washington.

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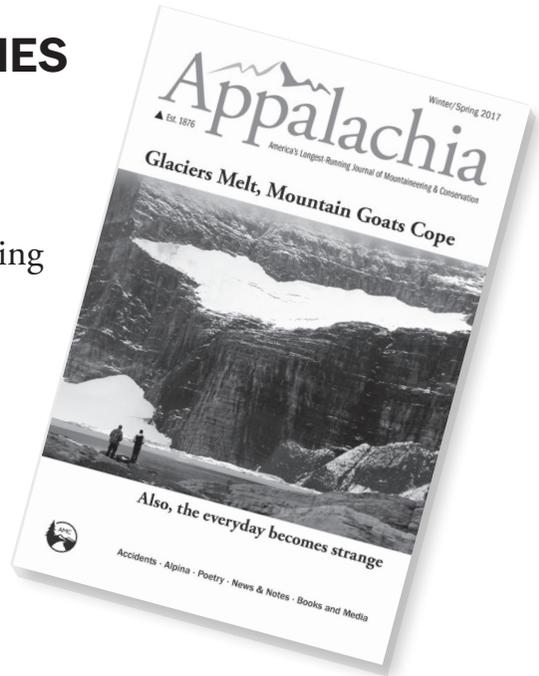
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