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Alpine Garden

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Alpine Garden

a plateau on Mount Washington

Wind ripples through rock
studded grasses, tousles my hair, drives
dirigible cumulous across a blue sea.

The massive summit cone of broken talus
looms on one side; craggy, muscular ravines,
a horizon of peaks and ridges on the other.

Exposed in a gray, bouldery vastness,
breathless from climbing, chilled by sweat,
I brave sunlight that stings my eyes, sears

my neck as I hopscotch rocks, pockets
of frilly Lapland rosebay blossoms.
Afoot where life feels thin, I spot

fallen stars of *diapensia* flourishing
in a green firmament, moss campion
firing pink in sheltered nooks.

Ambushed by drying wind, baked in sun,
squeezed in frozen ground half the year,
frail blossoms thrive where I'm a tourist.

Bent low, I sniff alpine azaleas
where boot-soles can kill, and missteps
at the edge have a long afterlife.

David K. Leff

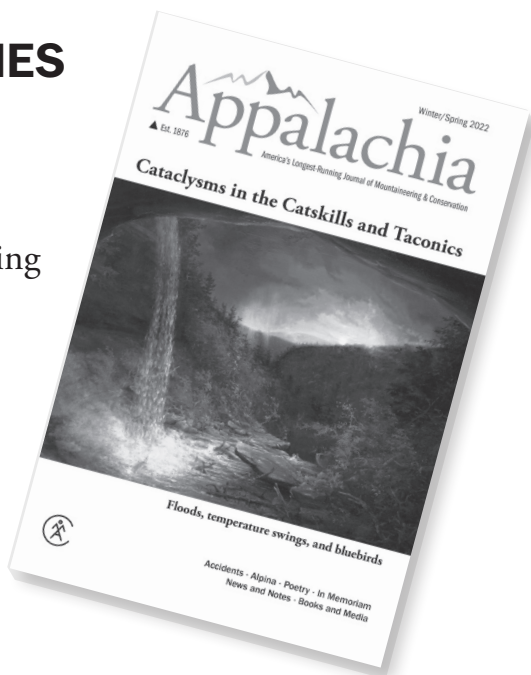
DAVID K. LEFF is an award-winning essayist and poet and former deputy commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. He is the author of six nonfiction books, three volumes of poetry, and two novels in verse. He served as poet-in-residence for the New England National Scenic Trail (NET) for 2016–2017. He is poetry editor of *Connecticut Woodlands*, the quarterly magazine of the Connecticut Forest and Park Association.

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