

Appalachia

Volume 63
Number 2 *Summer/Fall 2012: The Lure of
Alaska*

Article 24

2012

Black Balsam Mountains

Benjamin Pryor

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.dartmouth.edu/appalachia>



Part of the [Poetry Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Pryor, Benjamin (2012) "Black Balsam Mountains," *Appalachia*: Vol. 63: No. 2, Article 24.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.dartmouth.edu/appalachia/vol63/iss2/24>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by Dartmouth Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Appalachia by an authorized editor of Dartmouth Digital Commons. For more information, please contact dartmouthdigitalcommons@groups.dartmouth.edu.

Black Balsam Mountains

Bear skeleton blanches under a locust bridge.

Logging road peters out at a spring head
where inch-thick mosses
coat the black stone.

Walker through steep meadows
skirts pink-gray boulders,
whitewater silhouette,
upward.

Crawls, hunted, fearing the rhododendron thicket.
Orange beads of fungus dot slick birch.

Sun steams stone after hours
of rain-pounding wind.

Cherokee rested on a rock of shining white quartz.
Might have pondered ridge beauty
and the next meal.

Fir and spruce cling to bald knobs
where wheat grasses flatten. Over
blackest earth,
so many outcroppings
resemble chipped points.

Mineral riches in rain pools are eager, laced
with lichen. Deer skitter beneath a rock ledge
vault into hardwood, the lower slopes'
barely fingered sunshine.

Loam and chicory.
Fern stocks a bed of spice.

Winding down the crinkum-krankum
trail that never looks the same,
that is only clear from a peak,
I backtrack.

Benjamin Pryor

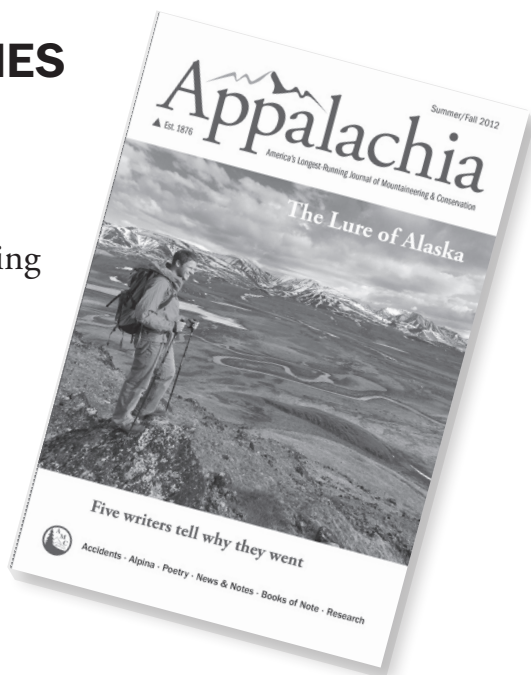
BENJAMIN PRYOR's work has appeared in *The Oxford American*, *The Southern Review*, and others. He lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

"I started reading Appalachia for the accident reports, but I kept reading for the great features."—Mohamed Ellozy, subscriber

SUPPORT THE STORIES YOU LOVE!

Start or renew your *Appalachia* subscription today, and keep reading America's longest-running journal of mountaineering and conservation.

Visit **outdoors.org/appalachia** for a special offer: 36% off the journal's cover price. That's three years of *Appalachia* (6 issues) for only \$42. Or choose a one-year subscription (2 issues) for \$18—18% off the cover price.



Inside every issue, you'll find:

- inspired writing on mountain exploration, adventurers, ecology, and conservation
- up-to-date news and notes on international expeditions
- analysis of recent Northeastern mountaineering accidents
- book reviews, poetry, and much more

Subscribe today at **outdoors.org/appalachia** or call 800-372-1758.



Subscription prices valid as of June 2022. Prices and offers subject to change without notice. For the most up-to-date information, visit outdoors.org.