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## Foolishness? No, It's Not

Mary Oliver

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### **Foolishness? No, It's Not**

Sometimes I spend all day trying to count  
the leaves on a single tree. To do this  
I have to climb branch by branch and write  
down the numbers in a little book. So I  
suppose, from their point of view, it's  
reasonable that my friends say: what  
foolishness! She's got her head in the  
clouds again.

But it's not. Of course I have to give up,  
but by then I'm half crazy with the  
wonder of it—the abundance of the leaves,  
the quietness of the branches, the hopelessness  
of my effort. And I am in that delicious and  
important place, roaring with laughter,  
full of earth-praise.

*Mary Oliver*

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MARY OLIVER has published twenty volumes of poetry, as well as works of imaginative prose and poetry instruction. *The Truro Bear and Other Adventures* (Beacon) was published in October 2008. *Evidence* (Beacon) was published in April 2009. Her most recent book, *Swan: Poems and Prose Poems* (Beacon), appeared in September 2010. She is also the editor of *The Best American Essays 2009*. Oliver is a frequent contributor to *Appalachia*.

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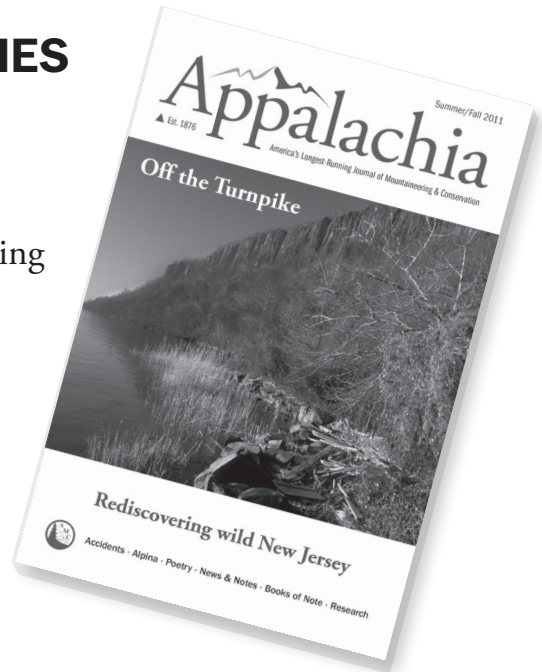
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