Russell Rowland
Fallen Trees on the Trails

When a tree crashes in ruin
across one of our well-maintained trails
in the Ossipees, we maintainers
take it personally—roll it, drag it, cut it up.

The shortest bushwhack reminds us—
in the arboreal course of things
trees eventually reach the stump end of life,

get bowled over by the wind,
surrender vertical for horizontal.

On-trail, more reverence
would become us, toward these old patriarchs
who fall asleep with their ancestors

in the long decomposition.

We might take off our caps for a moment
of silence. Acknowledge

the time our own people stripped these hills
for the farming, the hearth—

opened views of the lake for their children.

Sunlight on Heron Pond

We found its water secure and undisturbed
on a shoulder of Chocorua, but had to shade our eyes.
Twin suns—one above the surface,
another riding it—protected a pristine pond's reticence.

Any approach can dazzle, as with Moses—that bush
ablaze yet somehow not consumed.
When you and I first met, I smiled brightly as sunshine,
to blind you to a network of sorrow lines.

Hardly having seen, we squinted
and withdrew. Perhaps we'll return a different hour
or season, sun at a different place—to view
the pond. Then home, vindicated in our persistence.

Rescue Dog

That Husky mix I met on the trails
today, taking his mistress for a walk on her leash,
had one blue eye, the other missing.

His mistress told me he came from a place
down south I won't mention,
where people do not spay or neuter dogs much,

just drop pups off at the highway.
She thinks he grew up at the wrong end of a leash.

The Husky mix looked me over
with that blue remnant eye—he had sized me up
as a delay of the day's game—

then, looking ahead to the miles he and mistress
would walk together, gave a tug
to the leash. As we parted ways, I got thinking

about how, if one can only hold on
long enough, something wonderful might happen.