

Winning Poems in 2022 CFCP, Inc., Annual Contest

5. Nature, Any Style, First Place

Biding Their Time

On a cold, steel blue January day
at Grey Lodge Refuge thousands
of northern pintails, shovelers, widgeons
and cinnamon teal mingle with snow,
Ross and speckled belly geese, their
Reflections mirrored on flooded rice fields.
Skins of ducks stitch the fabric of sky
while giant V's of calling geese,
as if they stole that letter of the alphabet,
prepare to land, hovering, feet extended forward,
wings back flapping.

Thirty yards from the viewing platform,
thirteen turkey vultures sit stoically
in the mast of a dead cottonwood tree,
silent like vacant houses, eyes the color
of asphalt, folded wings funeral umbrellas.
They stand biding their time,
“wise guys” in trench coats.

Before dusk, the great flocks of birds lift,
thread across the tapestry of sky to feed
beyond the refuge. The vultures also take wing,
sail to water's edge where they walk solemnly,
judges in dark robes,
handing out their verdict to those left behind.

Tom Myers
Modesto, CA