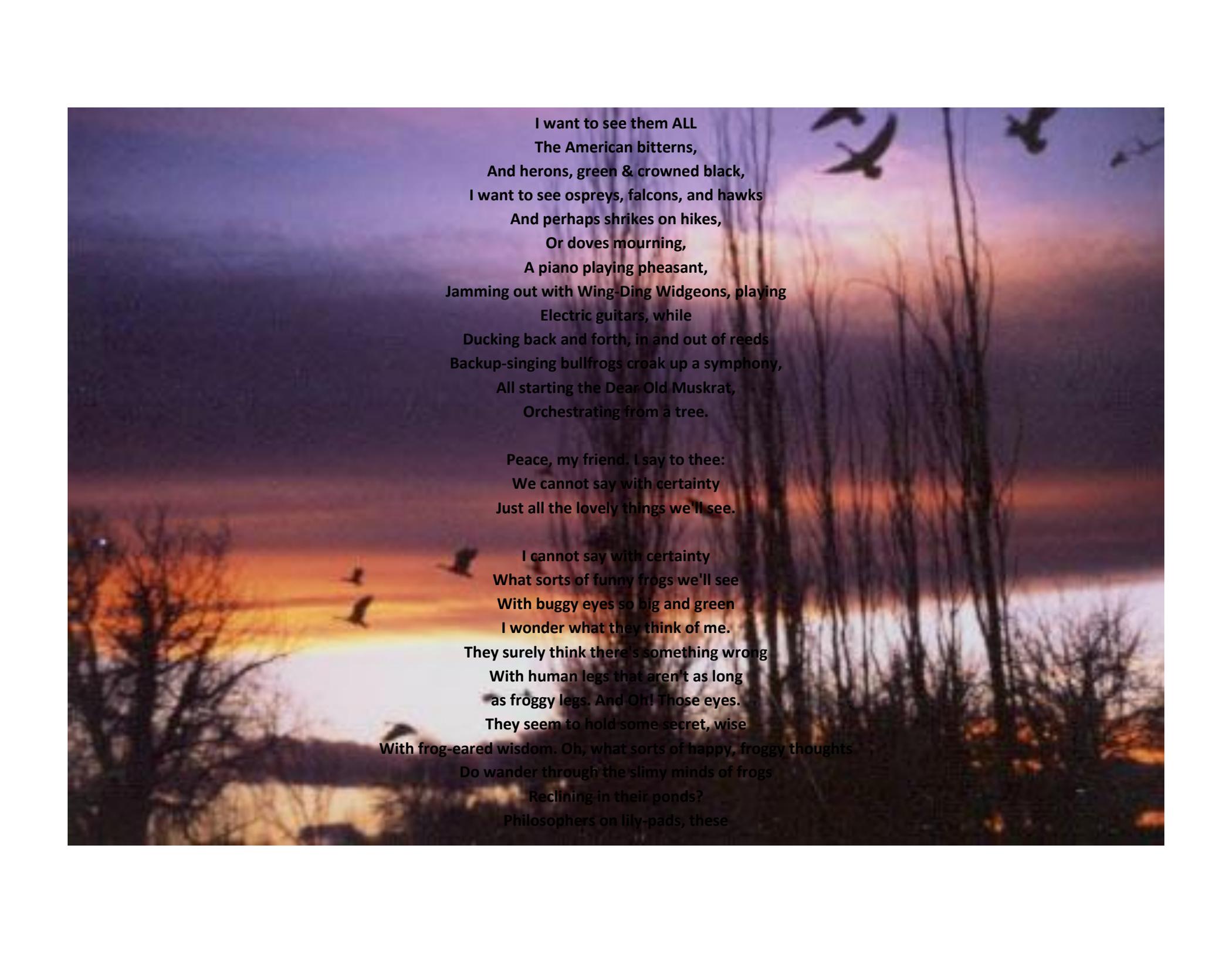
A photograph of a sunset over a pond. The sky is a mix of purple, pink, and orange. Several birds are flying in the sky. In the foreground, there are bare trees and bushes. The text is overlaid on the image.

MYSTERY OF TWO PONDS

I do not know!
I cannot say with certainty
Which birds or frogs or plants or plants we'll see.
It might be birds: yes, pied-billed grebes,
Or hummingbirds, or chickadees
Who sing their song with feathered ease,
To ring-necked ducks here at Two Ponds,
Backed by a chorus of cormorants.

I cannot say, I can't be sure,
If we will see a turkey vulture.
Without a hair upon his head
And wishing that we all were dead
To pick us for his mid-day meal.
I'd rather see a green-winged teal
If I could choose the birds I'd see.
But this, I cannot do with certainty.

I'd like to see a chimney-swift,
To cross it off my birding list.
With luck, a snipe will this way fly
And dive upon us from the sky
While meadowlarks would follow her
In company of tanagers.
This, and more, I'd like to see
Yes, wrens, and jays, and wood-peewees.

A sunset over a body of water with birds flying in the sky and bare trees in the foreground. The sky is a mix of purple, pink, and orange. The water is dark, and the trees are silhouetted against the bright light of the setting sun.

I want to see them ALL
The American bitterns,
And herons, green & crowned black,
I want to see ospreys, falcons, and hawks
And perhaps shrikes on hikes,
Or doves mourning,
A piano playing pheasant,
Jamming out with Wing-Ding Widgeons, playing
Electric guitars, while
Ducking back and forth, in and out of reeds
Backup-singing bullfrogs croak up a symphony,
All starting the Dear Old Muskrat,
Orchestrating from a tree.

Peace, my friend. I say to thee:
We cannot say with certainty
Just all the lovely things we'll see.

I cannot say with certainty
What sorts of funny frogs we'll see
With buggy eyes so big and green
I wonder what they think of me.
They surely think there's something wrong
With human legs that aren't as long
as froggy legs. And Oh! Those eyes.
They seem to hold some secret, wise
With frog-eared wisdom. Oh, what sorts of happy, froggy thoughts
Do wander through the slimy minds of frogs
Reclining in their ponds?
Philosophers on lily-pads, these

A sunset over a body of water with silhouettes of trees and birds in flight.

sages in the wetland grass.
Yet surely, I can never tell
What thoughts in froggish minds are held.

And Wabby Warblers?
Sure!

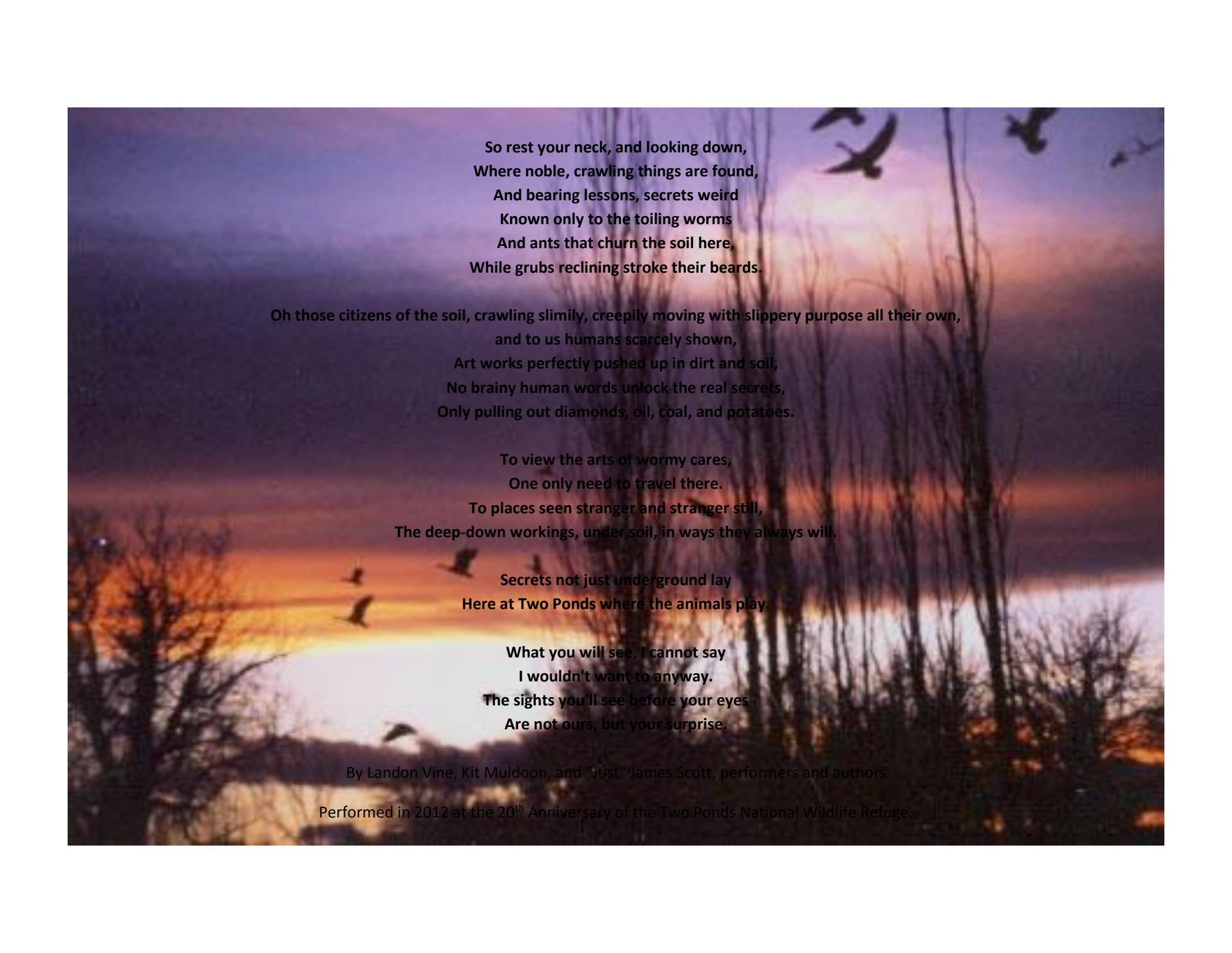
And Belted Kingfishers?
Yes!

And olive-sided flycatchers building nests of all manner of careful things,
Spreading off their silky wings,
And tiny flies for prey a-catching,
In the nest with eggs a-hatching,
Little olive-sided birds
That speak with songs, but not with words.

Yes, what songs they gaily make
With beaks and wings to serenade
The sky and grace the trees with song,
Their concert free for all to hear
As listening, we walk along.

Yeah, the Rock'n'Rollin' Rock Wren,
And Blues-Bellowing Blue Jays!

Behold! There is another world
Where greenish gnarled weeds a-curl
And shelter fiefdoms in the soil.
Where ants, and worms, and Earth-grubs toil
Beneath the dirt where roots unfurl.

The background of the page is a photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sky is a mix of purple, pink, and orange. In the foreground, there are dark silhouettes of trees and several birds in flight against the bright sky.

So rest your neck, and looking down,
Where noble, crawling things are found,
And bearing lessons, secrets weird
Known only to the toiling worms
And ants that churn the soil here,
While grubs reclining stroke their beards.

Oh those citizens of the soil, crawling slimily, creepily moving with slippery purpose all their own,
and to us humans scarcely shown,
Art works perfectly pushed up in dirt and soil,
No brainy human words unlock the real secrets,
Only pulling out diamonds, oil, coal, and potatoes.

To view the arts of wormy cares,
One only need to travel there.
To places seen stranger and stranger still,
The deep-down workings, under soil, in ways they always will.

Secrets not just underground lay
Here at Two Ponds where the animals play.

What you will see, I cannot say
I wouldn't want to anyway.
The sights you'll see before your eyes
Are not ours, but your surprise.

By Landon Vine, Kit Muldoon, and "Just" James Scott, performers and authors

Performed in 2012 at the 20th Anniversary of the Two Ponds National Wildlife Refuge.