



Anhinga

On the J.J. Mayes Wildlife Trace near Wallisville
In the winter after Harvey.

The roadside ponds are full of water and birds,
Coots, moorhen, cormorants, egrets, ibis,
All wedged together in cooperative feeding,
Soft green floating pads pushed aside
As the group moves along the shore,
Some in and part out of the water,
But the snake bird – the anhinga – stands out, unique,
A bird conjuring thoughts of animistic Gods
And heathen worshipers at the foot of the neck
Extending from the water, coming up from below,
An avian submarine with a magnificent rudder of a tail,
Broad and flat, an identifying feature
When it spreads its wings and dries its feathers
In an act of pure pleasure.

Driving along I reflect on my part in the battle
To save this Wallisville site from an unneeded reservoir,
A wetland saved because Audubon Society and others
Cared enough to stand up and fight
On behalf of nature - nature that I experience today
Worshiping with the snake bird, smiling at the shivers
That that characterization would give
My now-departed, god-fearing mother,
A thought of love and appreciation for her
As I bathe in the feelings of joy and peace coming
From inhabitants saved from the reservoir.

I thank those of you who have guarded my life,
For allowing me today to attend services
In a chapel of my church - The Earth -
A chapel that has special meaning to me,
A chapel protected by environmental laws
And stewards who cared enough to hire
An inexperienced young environmental lawyer
And send him forward on his life's path,
A path leading to rewards of the soul
Far beyond his early imaginings,
Soul food that I consume today
Here at Wallisville with the snake bird.