Green-winged Teal

In the marsh near Keith Lake
In Jefferson County in the fall.

The sky blooms purple and gold,
The sun still hiding beneath the rim,
Twenty or so wildly flying bodies
Streaking down the bayou pathway,
Wildly weaving from side to side,
Banking as if to land,
Only to blast away
To do it again and again,
Leaving behind the sound of wings,
Leaving no doubt that the green-winged teal
Just passed by,
Offering the natural system’s counterpoint
To the Blue Angels’ visit to Houston,
Both flying in formation, both fast,
Both leaving sound behind,
Both heading back to land somewhere.

Such a beautiful wisp is the green-winged teal,
All air and sound and speed,
Epitomizing that which defines alive,
Articulating by action the inalienable right
That belongs to all Earth residents -
The right to continue to exist
Through the time of humans.

And later when I see the mixed flock
Of big ducks and their smaller partners,
I smile as I think of the lovely little one
Giving nothing away to its cousins,
Flying beat for beat with the mallard
And the pintail and the grey duck,
Making them jealous of red and green majesty
And the ability to turn on a dime
To land in that secluded place
Away from the maddening crowd
Where they find peaceful rest
Before they migrate north to do it all again.