

LYNN PEDERSEN

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Wilson's Warbler

*I shall at least leave a small beacon to point out where I perished.*

Alexander Wilson, speaking of his ornithology

Like children divvying up marbles,

Linnaeus claims the plants, his friend Peter Artedi  
the fishes,

and decades later, Alexander Wilson,  
North American birds, *their habits and habitats, as if they were companions.*

A schema on which to hang every species. Thistle, poison ivy

pose no problems,

but birds and fishes are another story:

Artedi, in spite of his love of the sea, anglers and pufferfish,  
drowns at thirty in an Amsterdam canal, and Wilson succumbs  
to dysentery, though myth has it

he drowned in a river  
in pursuit of a bird. *The irony*

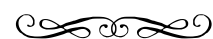
*of some stories is in their truncation.*

And Wilson's promise (years before he died)  
that he would continue his quest *even if it killed him—*

as if the Black

Throated Bunting thirsted in its dry meadowlands and canary grass  
for categorization, not wanting to be mistaken  
as it is—its flight and notes—for the Corn Bunting of Europe.

All along it's Wilson who doesn't want to be  
mistaken, *subsumed*. Birds named after him,  
rather than sons.



## ABOUT LYNN PEDERSEN

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Lynn Pedersen's poems, essays, and reviews have appeared in *New England Review*, *Ecotone*, *Poet Lore*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and *Palo Alto Review*. Her chapbook, *Theories of Rain*, was published by Main Street Rag in 2009. A graduate of the Vermont College of Fine Arts, she lives in Atlanta, Georgia. Her website is located at [lynnpedersen.wordpress.com](http://lynnpedersen.wordpress.com).

A bibliographic note:

The epigraph is drawn from the biography of Alexander Wilson available at the website *Alexander Wilson, American Ornithologist*, created by Janet Haven and published by the American Studies Program of the University of Virginia. Italicized words within the poem are quoted or adapted from the same source.

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~public/wilson/front.html>

