

Editor: Judith Fortney
PO Box 51969
Durham NC 27717
jafortney1@aol.com

birding the triangle . . . and beyond, for over half a century

The Bulletin

Chapel Hill Bird Club

May 2013

<http://chbc.carolinanature.com>

Volume 41
No.5

Next Meeting: Monday, 20 May

When/where: 7:15 pm refreshments;
7.30 pm meeting. The lounge, Olin T
Binkley Baptist Church, corner of
Highway 15-501 Bypass and Willow
Drive, behind University Mall, Chapel
Hill.

20 May Norm Budnitz
Birding Islands in the Bering Sea

Adak Island in the Aleutians, St Paul
Island in the Pribilofs and St
Lawrence Island just south of the
Bering Strait. There are alcids galore
(puffins, auklets, murrelets and more)
in breeding plumage. Bering Sea
specialties (Red-faced Cormorants
and Red-legged Kittiwakes), and
strays from Asia. Cold, rain, sleet and
snow. Lovely! Birding on these islands
can be a challenging, rewarding
and a beautiful experience.

[I know, this is late. My fault, please
forgive. It was a terrific talk! This was
the last meeting of the year. We'll
see you in September – speaker and
subject to be announced. And this is
also the last **Bulletin** until September]

Saturday Field Trips

Trips are led by **Doug Shadwick** and
depart from Glen Lennox Shopping
Center parking lot off Highway 54
promptly at 7.30 every Saturday
morning. **The walks are finished for
the summer and will resume about
Labor Day.**

Future Meetings

The 2013-14 schedule of speakers
and topics will be announced in the
September issue of the Bulletin. Stay
tuned.

Book Review

***Nature's Engraver: A Life of
Thomas Bewick***, Jenny Uglow,
Faber & Faber, London 2006.

This delightful book is a biography of
Thomas Bewick (pronounced like the
car Buick, not Bee-wick) who lived
from 1753 to 1828. Bewick published
one of the earliest field guides – *A
History of British Birds* – "history" is
used in the sense of natural history.
The work was published in two parts,
Land Birds appeared in 1797 and

Water Birds came out in 1804. Bewick's medium was the woodcut which he raised to a new level of perfection by using the end grain of box wood and the tiny metal tools (which he made himself) usually used for copper engraving. Bewick's tiny illustrations were greatly admired for their lifelike qualities; he drew from life or recently shot specimens – no stuffed models or skins for him.



(Wikipedia)

Like John James Audubon (who was a generation younger, 1785 – 1851), Bewick always drew birds in their habitat and in a typical stance. The two men met and conferred when Audubon was in Britain seeking engravers and a publisher for his work.

Uglow goes to great pains to place Bewick in context. He was first and foremost a North countryman, born near Newcastle in the northeast of England on the River Tyne. He said that he would rather be a lowly shepherd in Tyneside than live in London which he visited as rarely as possible.

The late eighteenth century in Britain was characterized by great interest in philosophy and science –

electricity, evolution, taxonomy, geology. (See also by the same author, *The Lunar Men*; and Simon Winchester, *The Map that Changed the World*). Bewick was a man of his time and was a founding member of a club in Newcastle which met regularly to discuss advances in science and philosophy. Bewick, like many of his friends and contemporaries, was also a political animal, seeking wider suffrage and a more democratic society, opposing enclosure laws, and supporting independence for the American colonies.

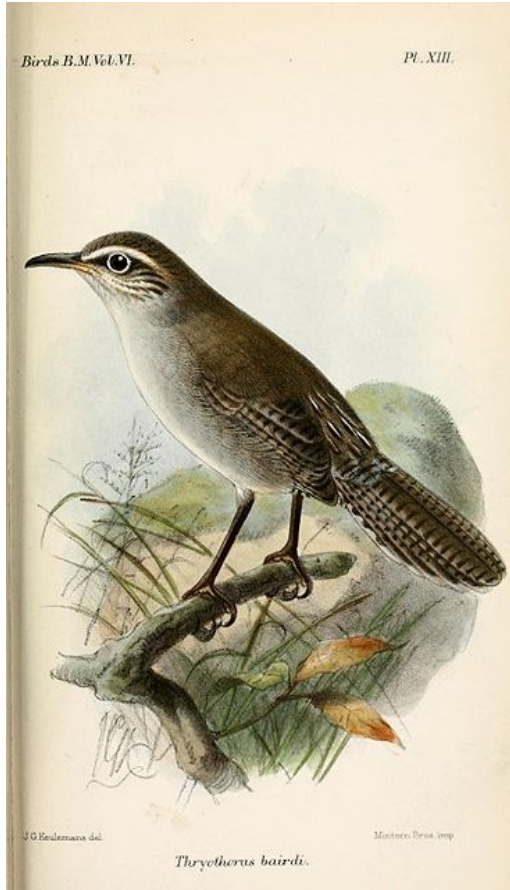
In the years of preparation of *A History of British Birds*, Bewick spent much time pondering how to group birds.¹ Though he eventually decided on land birds and water birds, he did not find this entirely satisfactory. He also considered other possible groupings including wild and domesticated. When the 2nd edition was published he acknowledged the new principles of taxonomy and included Linnaeus's scientific names. As old birders well know, the taxonomic order and groupings continue to change.

Some readers may find that Uglow provides excessive detail. I happen to enjoy that, finding that it adds greatly to the context and depth of understanding. But it does make it a book that is difficult to skim.

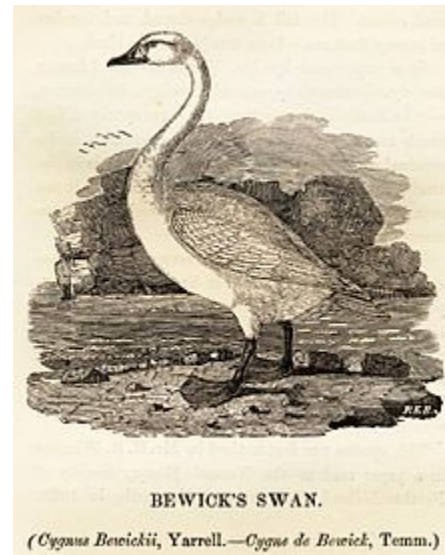
Bewick had two birds named for him:

¹ I once bought a field guide to New Zealand birds published in the 1920s. This book grouped birds by size starting with the largest (Yellow-eyed Penguin) and finishing with the smallest (Rifleman).

- the Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*) named by JJ Audubon in 1829, and



- Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*), the smaller of the two subspecies of Tundra Swan named by Yarell in 1830 (the other subspecies – *C.c. columbianus* (named by Ord in 1815) – is the one which winters in our coastal North Carolina waters and is sometimes called the Whistling Swan).



Officers of the Chapel Hill Bird Club

Elected Officers

President: David Smith
(davidjudysmith@frontier.com)
Vice President (Durham area): Eddie Owens
(banjoman_57@yahoo.com)
Vice President (Chapel Hill area): Kent Fiala
(kent.fiala@gmail.com)
Treasurer: Patricia Bailey
(pbailey_489@yahoo.com)
Secretary: Edith Tatum
(etatum@nc.rr.com)

Appointed Officers

Bird Count Supervisor/compiler: Will Cook
(cwcook@duke.edu)
Field Trip Chairman: Doug Shadwick
(dougshadwick@nc.rr.com)
Bulletin Editor: Judith Fortney
(jafortney1@aol.com)
Webmaster: Will Cook
(cwcook@duke.edu)

Chapel Hill Bird Club
PO Box 51969
Durham NC 27717