

(Jeff Lemons)



## Vireonidae the VIREOS

Vireos are a group of relatively small, solitary, frequently plain-colored songbirds that are more often heard than seen. They are regularly confused with warblers, and like warblers, they are often seen foraging for insects high in a tree. Vireos are generally a bit bulkier and slower moving than warblers. Their shorter bill is a somewhat heavier than a warbler's bill, and the tip of the upper bill has a slight hook that a warbler's bill lacks. There are fewer than 40 species of vireos recognized in the world, and all are found in North America, South America, or in the Caribbean. Though they superficially resemble warblers, taxonomically they are more closely related to shrikes.

A total of 16 species of vireos have shown up in North America. Nine of these have been documented in the Carolinas. This includes a Yellow-Green Vireo banded on the coast of South Carolina in 2016. Only six species have been confirmed in the Central Carolinas, and five of these six vireos breed here. Our nesting vireos hang tightly built cup nests between forked branches on a tree. These nests often last well into the winter months when, after leaf-drop, they are more easily found.

As vireos are more easily heard than seen, it is recommended that birders refer to online audio recordings for comparison of their individual songs, in advance of heading into the field. One should then be able to track the bird down by listening to and following its song.

“The vireos are...delightful birds and tireless seekers of insects. They feast on moths, locusts, larvae, caterpillars, beetles, and chinch-bugs, these comprising about four-fifths of the food of this group.”

—*The Charlotte Observer*, July 18, 1915