

Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus*



Folk Name: Brotherly-love Vireo

Status: Migrant

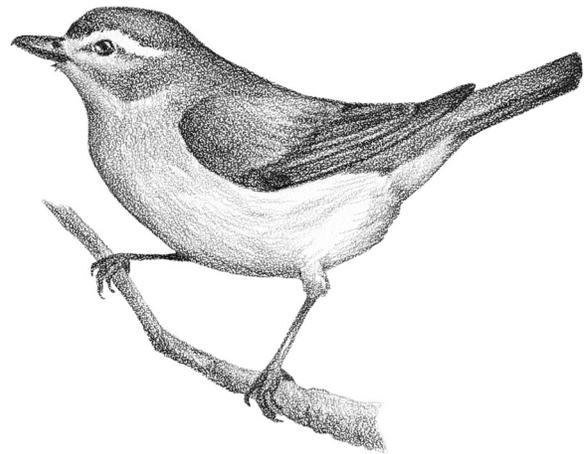
Abundance: Rare

Habitat: Hardwood forests

The Philadelphia Vireo only breeds in Canada and the upper northeastern United States. It migrates through the Carolina Piedmont each year and is considered a very rare visitor in the spring and a rare visitor in the fall. Fall birds may often be overlooked or perhaps regularly misidentified as the similar-looking Red-eyed Vireo or possibly a Tennessee Warbler. This neotropical migrant primarily winters in Central America.

The Philadelphia Vireo has been described as “one of the rarest ‘Eastern’ migrants in the Carolinas during the spring.” We have a grand total of five reports of this vireo from our region during that season. Our earliest spring arrival was a bird seen by Tom Sanders at Evergreen Nature Preserve in Charlotte on April 28, 2014. Sanders described seeing the bird’s “dark lores, yellow washed chest and yellow undertail coverts.” John Kirk reported one at Kings Mountain National Military Park on May 10, 2014. Rob Gilson saw one at Latta Plantation Nature Preserve in Huntersville on May 12, 2013, and noted: “feeding mid story on the trail leading to the prairie. Dark lores, white eyebrow, yellow throat.” The latest spring bird was a bird reported by Mary Miller in Chester County on May 18, 2014. An astounding total of six Philadelphia Vireos was reported on the Stanly Spring Bird Count held on April 28, 1973, and is very likely in error. No other Philadelphia Vireos were reported on any count in either state that year and no details of these birds were provided. Our highest count ever in the spring or fall has only been two birds.

In the twentieth century, this species was reported about 10 times in or around the region. Joe and Becky Norwood identified and collected two Philadelphia Vireos out of hundreds of dead songbirds killed during migration at the WSOC tower in Charlotte in October 1959. Dick Brown collected one at the base of the WRET television tower in Charlotte on October 11, 1978. The specimen was added to the bird collection at UNC Charlotte. David Wright found one in Davidson on September 16, 1983, and then two in Fort Mill, York County, on September 26–27, 1983. He found one in Gaston County on September 22, 1984. Paul Hart reported one at Crowders Mountain State Park on September 26, 1986. Lex Glover found one in Kershaw County on September 28, 1988. Simon Thompson reported one in Spartanburg County on September 27, 1989, and David Wright sighted one in



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northern Mecklenburg County on September 29, 1989. Taylor Piephoff reported one in Mecklenburg County on October 3, 1990. A Philadelphia Vireo was the highlight of a Foothills Birding Club walk in Hickory on September 18, 1999. Leader Dwayne Martin reported “it gave us all very good looks.”

Reports have increased significantly since the turn of the twenty-first century. This is possibly because more birders are in the field and they are paying closer attention to this species. Between 2003 and 2016, there were more than two dozen reports of Philadelphia Vireos moving through the Central Carolinas in September and October. Our earliest fall date on record is 4 September, and our latest is 16 October. We have no reports of this species from November through the end of March or during the months of June, July, or August.



Philadelphia Vireo. (Jeff Lemons)