

White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus*



Folk Name: Branch-swinging Bird

Status: Breeder and Winter Visitor

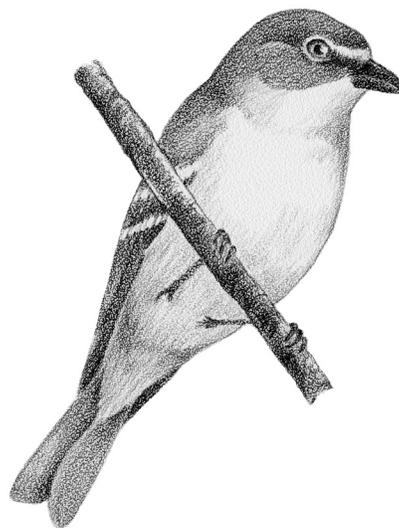
Abundance: Fairly Common to Common

Habitat: Dense thickets, and moist, shrubby, vine-covered tangles

Adult White-eyed Vireos have conspicuous white eyes with yellow spectacles connecting them. They are gray above and have two wing bars and a white belly with yellow sides. At 5 inches in length, this vireo is our smallest, a full inch smaller than our common Red-eyed Vireo. The White-eyed Vireo is usually found in thickets instead of the forest habitat that our other vireos prefer. They are fairly common to common during breeding season throughout this region.

Historically, White-eyed Vireos were found here between March and October. However, over the past four decades, this bird has begun to linger into the winter months, and it has now been documented every month of the year in the Central Carolinas. Spring migrants now arrive as early as the end of February.

In the late 1800s, Leverett Loomis reported the White-eyed Vireo as “abundant” in migration and “common” in breeding season in Chester County. E.M. Hoffman and Elmer Brown reported a White-eyed Vireo in Rowan County on April 5, 1924. William McIlwaine reported this vireo breeding in Mecklenburg County in the late 1920s. On May 31, 1928, he wrote: “I was out with Barry Shatzer, Jr. We saw a blue-gray gnatcatcher, and found the nest of a white-eyed vireo. This nest held four white eggs with a few black spots on the larger end. China white.” On April 8, 1929, he wrote: “But the most conspicuous thing in the rounds of the day was the white-eyed vireo. Any old stream with trees along its banks, and the white-eyed will be there with his song. ... Truly his is a varied



repertoire. One week ago I thought I saw one white-eyed vireo. Today I know they are abundant.”

On March 13, 1940, Charlie Sellers reported the arrival of a White-eyed Vireo as “[o]ur early record” for Charlotte. In 1941, Grace Anderson reported the late date for this bird in Iredell County as 13 October. In 1944, Gabriel Cannon reported them arriving in Spartanburg on 26 March, and Elizabeth Clarkson noted that in Charlotte, “the first White-eyed Vireos came in on March 27.” On September 26, 1955, a group of Mecklenburg Audubon Club members scoured the ground below the ceilometer tower at the Charlotte Municipal Airport and discovered a single dead White-eyed Vireo amongst about 100 other dead songbirds. On October 8th, 1959, Joe Norwood collected a single White-eyed Vireo among



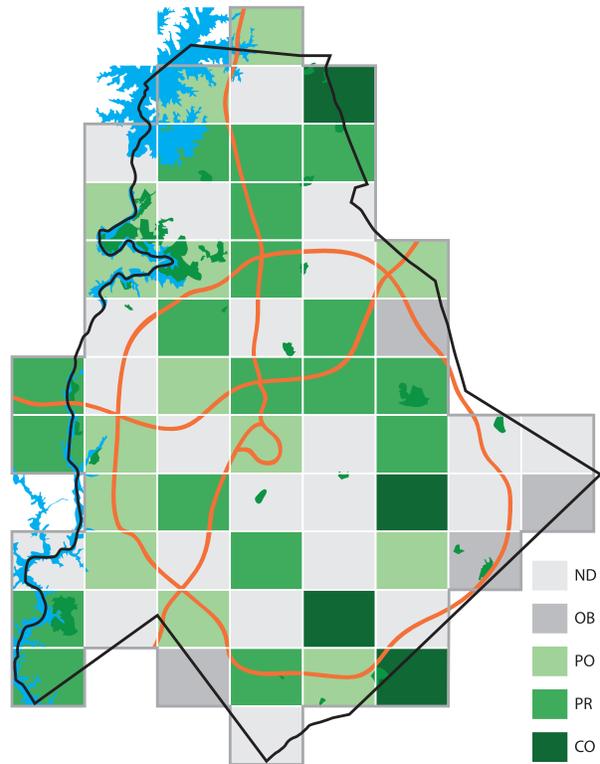
White-eyed Vireo nest with a Brown-headed Cowbird egg (left egg). (MCPRD staff)



White-eyed Vireo at Six Mile Creek Greenway. (Ron Clark)

about 400 dead songbirds killed overnight at the WSOC television tower in Charlotte. The highest one-day count of this species in the region was 44 birds found on the Charlotte Spring Bird Count held on May 2, 1987.

Nests are generally built in late April and have four eggs. Young hatch around 7 May and may fledge by 15 May. Second broods can be raised. Parasitism of White-eyed Vireo nests by the Brown-headed Cowbird has been confirmed several times in the region, most recently during the Mecklenburg BBA. One nest was found on Six Mile Creek Greenway with a single, large cowbird nestling being fed caterpillars by adult vireos on July 25, 2015.



Mecklenburg County Breeding Bird Atlas:
Fairly Widespread (PR/18, CO/4)