



Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Natural Heritage Program

Vireo bellii Bell's Vireo



Photo by Dan Lane

Identification: Small vireo (length 115-125 mm). Similar in size and coloring to the white-eyed vireo. Yellowish-green back; light yellow flanks (under wings); white belly; two white wing bars; faint white ring around eye that extends to beak; eyes are completely black (the white-eyed vireo has a white iris). Males and females have the same physical appearance.

Voice: “cheedle cheedle chee? cheedle cheedle chew!”

Taxonomic comments: There are four subspecies, the subspecies *Vireo bellii bellii* breeds in Louisiana.

Status: Global rank is **G5** and state rank is **S1B, SAN**

Habitat: Willow trees and shrubs in river bottomlands and streamside, and area with dense understory vegetation such as along streams or in second growth forest.

Range: Breeds in Central and Southwestern United States and Northern Mexico, range is expanding eastward. Winters in Mexico and Nicaragua.

Food habits: mainly insects and small spiders.

Life expectancy: Most individuals live 3-4 years but some may live as long as 7 years.

Reproduction: As a part of their courtship, pairs build a cup-shaped nest suspended between two branches 3-5 feet above the ground. Four white eggs with small brown and black specs are laid 1-2 days after the nest is completed. Fourteen days later eggs hatch and young fledge 10-12 days after that. It has been reported that a pair may produce as many as four broods per season, but it is uncommon.

Reason for decline: Historically rare in Louisiana. Populations are threatened by nest parasitism by cowbirds. Alterations of shrubby habitats such by overgrazing, firewood cutting, agriculture, urbanization; or alteration of river habitats through flood control or dam release may destroy feeding and breeding habitats.

Interesting facts: Both parents incubate the eggs although only the female incubates the eggs at night. The switching of incubation duties is performed with much fanfare as both male and female parents sing to each other, coordinating the exchange.

Known distribution in Louisiana:



Dates of documented observations are: 1999, and 2000

References

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