

red-eyed vireo

Vireo olivaceus

FEATURES

The red-eyed vireo averages six inches in length. A white stripe bordered by black is present over each eye. This bird has a gray-feathered cap on its head. The back feathers are olive-green, and the belly feathers are light with a gray wash. The iris of the eye is red in adults and brown in immature birds of this species.

BEHAVIORS

The red-eyed vireo is an abundant migrant and summer resident statewide. It winters in South America in the Amazon basin. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in mid-April. Nesting occurs in early spring. The nest is cup-shaped and suspended in the fork of a tree branch from two to 60 feet above the ground. The nest is built of bark, rootlets, paper, grasses and other plant materials and is covered on the outside with spider webs and lichens. The female builds the nest in about five days. Three to five speckled, white eggs are laid by the female, and she does most of the incubation over the 12- to 14-day incubation period. Usually one brood per year is raised. Nests are often parasitized by the brown-headed cowbird that deposits an egg that the red-eyed vireo will hatch and raise, taking food and care away from its own young. Fall migration begins in August. This bird lives in upland and bottomland forests, parks and cemeteries. Its song is composed of short phrases that are separated by pauses and repeated often. It eats insects and fruits.

TAXONOMY

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Vireonidae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

ILLINOIS RANGE



Migrating



Summer

© Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 2024. *Biodiversity of Illinois*.

Unless otherwise noted, photos and images © Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

© Mary Kay Rubey



adult

© Mary Kay Rubey



adult on nest

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; coniferous forests; southern Illinois lowlands;
upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none