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## Red-eyed Vireo     *Vireo olivaceus*

The Red-eyed Vireo is one of the most widespread species in eastern deciduous forests. It breeds from British Columbia to Newfoundland and south to Texas and Florida, and winters in the Amazon Basin.

In Florida this vireo does not reach the high densities that occur elsewhere in the east, but it is found throughout the Panhandle and the northern half of peninsular Florida where hardwoods dominate. When breeding activities conclude each summer, this species departs on its annual odyssey southward to the tropical forests of the Amazon Basin.

**Habitat.** The Red-eyed Vireo is closely associated with mature deciduous woodlands. These woodlands can be composed purely of hardwoods, hardwood-pine mixtures, and suburbs with extensive canopy cover. This species forages most frequently within the canopy layer by hovering and foliage gleaning after insects and other invertebrates. During the nonbreeding period, fruit becomes very important in the diet.



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Red-eyed Vireo nests are usually placed high in the canopy. They are an intricately woven basket-like cup of grasses, rootlets, and bark, suspended from a forked twig. The 4 eggs are white, spotted with browns and black, but are occasionally unmarked. Incubation lasts 11-14 days, and the young fledge by 10 to 12 days after hatching. Red-eyed Vireos are frequent *Brown-headed Cowbird* hosts.

**Seasonal Occurrence.** Breeding spans from mid-May to mid-July, and young are present within territories well into August, mixing with migrants into September and October. Spring migration peaks in April and again in the fall from mid-September to mid-October. The safe-dates for this species (15 May - 1 Aug) would allow for the reporting of some migrants.

**Status.** The Red-eyed Vireo is a breeding summer resident through all but the southernmost part of the mainland (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). Nesting appears to occur throughout the northern half of peninsular Florida, outside of the Kissimmee Prairie and upper St. Johns River area. Confirmed nesting records occur as far south as Collier County. Northern Monroe County is the southernmost point where this species is suspected of breeding. The Red-eyed Vireo is most easily detected by its song, which is often given into the heat of the afternoon.

William C. Hunter

# Red-eyed Vireo

