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## White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus*

The White-eyed Vireo is a small attractive bird, at times frustratingly difficult to see, but conspicuous because of its distinctive song.

Its breeding range extends from Nebraska to Massachusetts, south to eastern Mexico and throughout Florida. It winters from the southern Gulf coast to Central America and from coastal North Carolina, the Bahamas, and Bermuda to the Caribbean.

**Habitat.** The White-eyed Vireo inhabits virtually any habitat type that contains a well-developed understory including, dense thickets, pine flatwoods, cypress swamps, and scrubby edges of roads, canals, and ponds. The Key West Vireo (*V. g. maynardi*) also occurs in mangrove forests and West Indian hardwood hammocks in the Keys and extreme southern mainland (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). The White-eyed Vireo tends to avoid urban areas, but it may be found in wooded parks and undeveloped areas near and within large cities. It forages in shrubs or dense undergrowth for insects, spiders, and small lizards. In fall and winter its diet is supplemented with seeds and berries (Terres 1980, Ehrlich et al. 1988).



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The nest of the White-eyed Vireo is usually located in a dense thicket 0.3 to 2.4 m (1 to 8 ft) above the ground. It is a deep cup composed of twigs, rootlets, strips of bark, coarse grass, and leaves. The nest is bound together with plant fibers and spider webs and is lined with fine grass (Ehrlich et al. 1988). A clutch consists of 3 to 5 eggs, white with brown or black spotting. Both adults incubate the eggs for 12 to 15 days. The young fledge at about 14 days of age.

**Seasonal Occurrence.** The White-eyed Vireo is a permanent resident in Florida. During migration, large numbers concentrate in the state. Peak migration periods occur in March and April and again in September and October (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). In winter the resident population shifts southward. Although most nesting activity occurs in May or June (Kale and Maehr 1990), the breeding season may extend from late February to mid-August and may include 2 broods (Cruickshank 1980, Terres 1980).

**Status.** The White-eyed Vireo's relative abundance, aggressive defense of its nest, and its ready response to "pishing" and taped *Eastern Screech-Owl* calls make it fairly easy to confirm breeding. It is a common and widespread breeding species throughout Florida. Curiously, it is absent during the summer from much of coastal Broward and Dade counties. Although the eastern portions of these counties are heavily urbanized, suitable breeding habitat is available, which is used by wintering birds from late September through mid-April. Although it is difficult to find the nest, it is usually fairly easy to observe parents carrying food for their nestlings or to see family group with recently fledged young, which are easily identified by their dark eyes.

M. C. Wheeler

Sponsored by Vera M. Nyland

# White-eyed Vireo

