

Warbling Vireo

Vireo gilvus

What the Warbling Vireo lacks in appearance—a drab gray and white bird often screened by aspen or cottonwood leaves—it makes up for with a complex and languid song. Although the Warbling Vireo breeds from southeast Alaska to Nova Scotia and southward to east Texas, Baja, and the mountains of Mexico, individuals in the West differ from eastern birds and, in the judgment of some specialists, should be designated as a separate species (Voelker and Rohwer 1998, Gardali and Ballard 2000). In Vermont the Warbling Vireo approaches the northern limit of its breeding range. Thompson (1853) reported this species in Vermont as early as the mid-nineteenth century. For a bird with such an expansive breeding range, the Warbling Vireo spends the winter in a very narrow belt in Central America, stretching from northern Mexico to Nicaragua (AOU 1998, Gardali and Ballard 2000).

The Warbling Vireo commonly nests from 6 to 12 meters (20 to 60 feet) high in mature, spreading, often somewhat isolated, deciduous trees in open woodlands, parks, suburbs, orchards, and fencerows (Baicich and Harrison 1997, Gardali and Ballard 2000, James 2007). It prefers proximity to water—streams, ponds, or rivers (Gardali and Ballard 2000). In the second atlas, nest building occurred from 15 May to 25 June (N = 16). Four nests with eggs were located from 1 June to 3 July, and nestlings were noted on 13 June (N = 2). Fledglings were reported from 5 June to 29 July (N = 24). Although silent birds are difficult to detect in dense foliage, the distinctive song of this species makes advertising males hard to miss.

The Warbling Vireo is widespread throughout the state except in heavily forested areas and in the higher elevations of the Green Mountains and the Northeastern Highlands. Occupancy was lowest in the Northeastern Highlands; still, the percent increase in this region was larger than in any other.

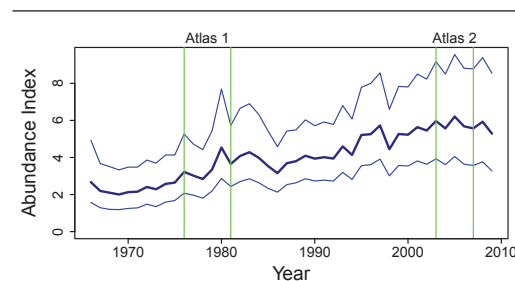
Statewide, the number of blocks with Warbling Vireos increased by 11 percent; block occupancy increased in all biophysical regions except the Northern Green Mountains and Northern Vermont Piedmont. The prevalence

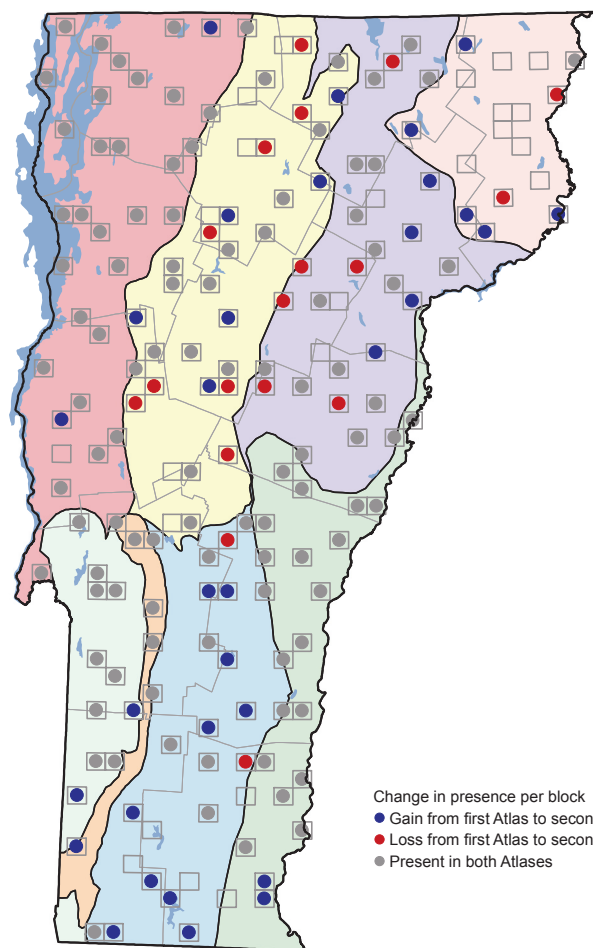


of largely coniferous forest with a closed canopy excludes this species in much of northern Vermont (Ellison 1985).

According to Breeding Bird Survey data from 1966 to 2007, Warbling Vireo populations significantly increased by 2.1 percent per year in Vermont. Increases also occurred during the shorter time period since the first atlas (from 1982 to 2007), although the trend was not significant. Massachusetts and New York also showed significant BBS increases of 4.3 and 1.4 percent per year, respectively, from 1982 to 2007 (Sauer et al. 2011). The second atlas in Maryland showed a 14 percent increase (Ellison 2010), while in Pennsylvania's second atlas, the number of blocks with Warbling Vireo increased by 76 percent (Wilson et al. 2012). New York's second atlas showed a 13 percent increase statewide, with the heavily urbanized Coastal Lowlands (Long Island) and the New York City area showing a surprising increase of 390 per-

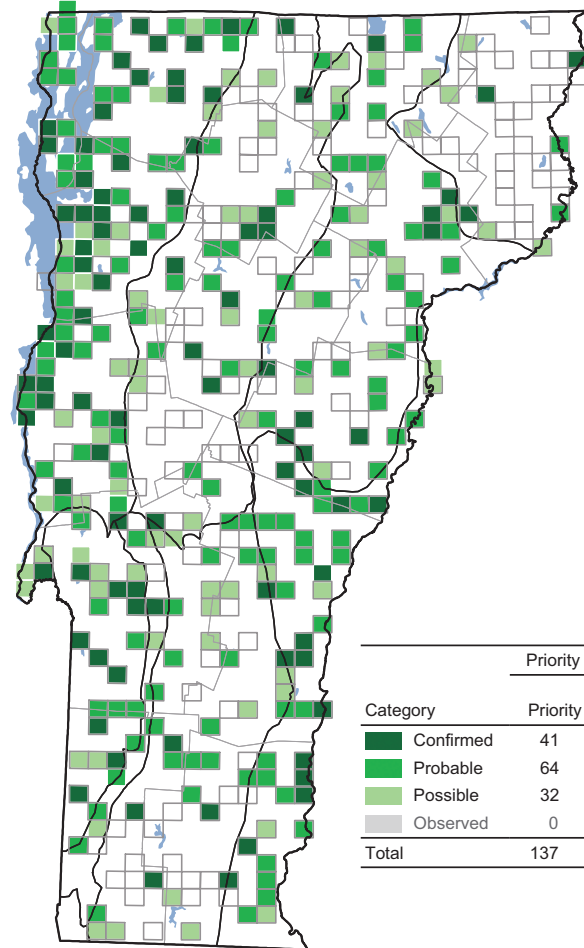
RELATIVE ABUNDANCE OVER TIME





CHANGE IN DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN ATLASES

Biophysical Region	First Atlas	Second Atlas	Change	% Change
Champlain Valley	30	32	+ 2	+ 7
Northeastern Highlands	3	6	+ 3	+ 100
Northern Green Mountains	23	21	- 2	- 9
Northern Vermont Piedmont	23	21	- 2	- 9
Southern Green Mountains	13	21	+ 8	+ 62
Southern Vermont Piedmont	18	20	+ 2	+ 11
Taconic Mountains	9	11	+ 2	+ 22
Vermont Valley	4	5	+ 1	+ 25
Totals	123	137	+ 14	+ 11



Category	Priority Block Count	
	Priority 1	Priority 1 & 2
Confirmed	41	80
Probable	64	126
Possible	32	58
Observed	0	0
Total	137	264

DISTRIBUTION IN CURRENT ATLAS

Biophysical Region	% of region species occupies	% of all records for this species found in region
Champlain Valley	97	27
Northeastern Highlands	27	4
Northern Green Mountains	55	14
Northern Vermont Piedmont	72	18
Southern Green Mountains	62	13
Southern Vermont Piedmont	95	14
Taconic Mountains	100	8
Vermont Valley	75	2

cent (McGowan 2008). In southern Ontario, both the second atlas and BBS data indicated that Warbling Vireo populations have been relatively stable (James 2007).

Atlas and BBS data both indicate that Warbling Vireo populations have been increasing in recent decades in much of the Northeast, including Vermont. This species has adapted well to suburban areas, including those developed decades ago, where continuing maturation of yard and roadside trees provides nesting opportunities. Current recommendations and regulations that promote preservation of shoreline trees also favor the Warbling

Vireo. At least for the near future, the forecast for this species is bright in Vermont.

GEORGE A. CLARK, JR.