

## Red-eyed Vireo

*Vireo olivaceus*



The Red-eyed Vireo is so abundant in the eastern deciduous forest—and so persistently vocal—that its monotonous song could be considered the avian equivalent of elevator music. Lawrence (1953) estimated that a single male may sing more than 20,000 songs a day—a characteristic that makes it easy for atlasers to document their presence. The species breeds across the northern portion of the continent to Washington and British Columbia; it winters in South America, where some resident, non-migratory populations also breed (Cimprich et al. 2000).

Vermont's Red-eyed Vireos winter in the Amazon Basin and return to the state in May. The species shows a preference for the interior of hardwood forests (Cimprich et al. 2000), and southern Vermont supports one of the highest densities in New England. In boreal zones, where it is less abundant (Sauer et al. 2011), the Red-eyed Vireo is more commonly found along streams bordered by alder thickets than in pure conifer stands. The nest is suspended from a forked branch, attached by spider silk (Cimprich et al. 2000). Nest building was observed from 18 May to 15 July (N = 48). Nests are usually placed in trees, from 2.5 to more than 4 meters (8 to more than 13 feet) above the ground, too high for easy viewing. Eggs were recorded from 27 May to 28 July (N = 21); the last dates probably represent re-nests. Chicks, which remain in the nest for 10 to 12 days, were recorded between 12 June and 9 July (N = 12). Fledglings may remain with the parents for weeks (Southern 1958) and were the most frequent source of breeding confirmations. Eighty records for fledglings were recorded from 20 June to 6 September.

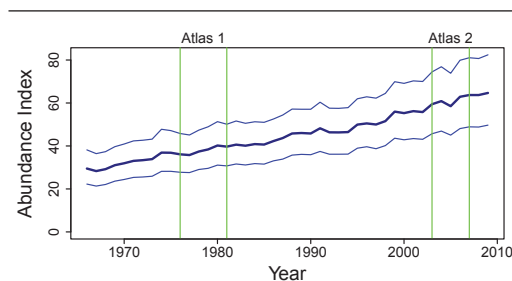
In the 1800s, agricultural clearing eliminated much of the species' original breeding habitat but, by the time of the first atlas, the state's forests had been largely reclaimed (Kibbe 1985). While the state's forestland has continued to mature, the Red-eyed Vireo continues to occupy all atlas blocks. Red-eyed Vireo and Ovenbird are the most abundant and widespread species found in Forest Bird Monitoring Project surveys, detected at 97 percent of point count stations in Vermont with an average of 1.3 birds per point (VCE unpubl. data). In fact, their numbers increased

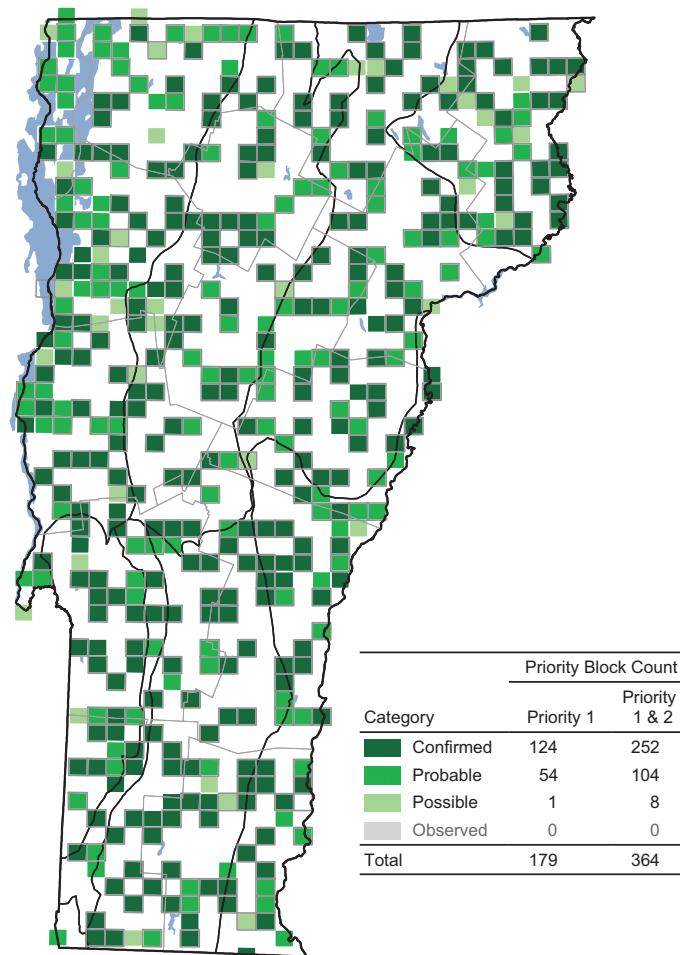
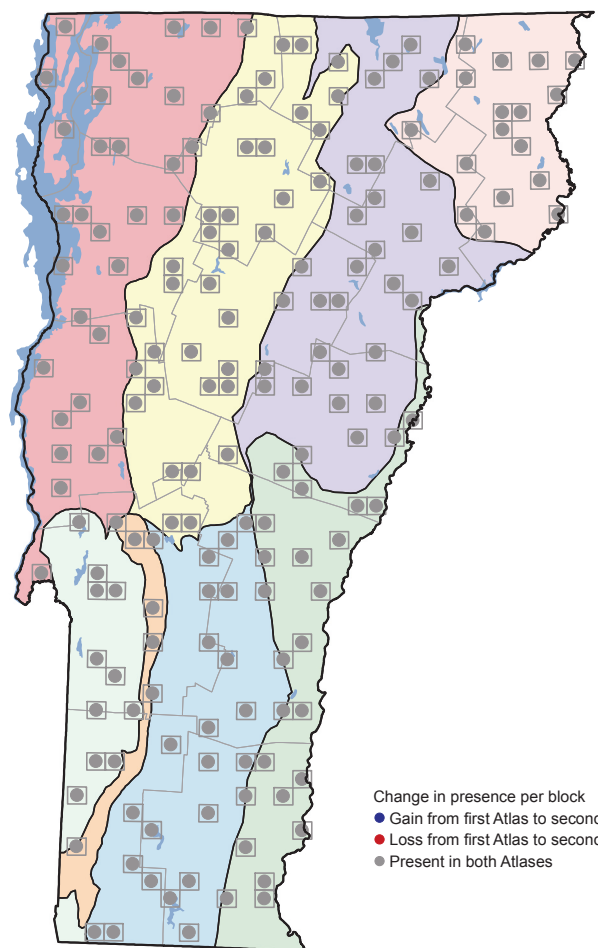
significantly by 1.7 percent per year from 1982 to 2007 (Sauer et al. 2011).

In second atlases completed in New York (McGowan and Corwin 2008) and Pennsylvania (Wilson et al. 2012), Red-eyed Vireos increased by 3 percent and 5 percent, respectively. In both states, the red-eyed is the sixth most widely distributed species, and shows a significant, positive population trend from 1982 to 2007 (Sauer et al. 2011). In central Ontario, atlas data show that the Red-eyed Vireo increased by 15 percent. In the southern portion of the province, where the species was already considered abundant, there was little change. The species was rated as one of the most common in the province, with an estimated population of 9 million birds (James 2007).

Since the initiation of the surveys in the 1960s, Breeding Bird Survey data have shown a significant, positive population trend for the Red-eyed Vireo throughout the United States and Canada (Sauer et al. 2011). This trend must, in part, reflect the increased availability of regenerating forest as farmland has given way to woodland in much of the Northeast. In the future, as urban sprawl reduces forest cover, some decline in the local abundance of Red-eyed Vireo is anticipated. Urbanization in Maryland may have triggered a slight decline (4 percent) in the number of blocks occupied by the species (Ellison 2010). Not surprisingly, Red-eyed Vireo was also found to be ab-

RELATIVE ABUNDANCE OVER TIME





#### CHANGE IN DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN ATLASES

| Biophysical Region        | First Atlas | Second Atlas | Change     | % Change   |
|---------------------------|-------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| Champlain Valley          | 33          | 33           | + 0        | + 0        |
| Northeastern Highlands    | 17          | 17           | + 0        | + 0        |
| Northern Green Mountains  | 35          | 35           | + 0        | + 0        |
| Northern Vermont Piedmont | 30          | 30           | + 0        | + 0        |
| Southern Green Mountains  | 27          | 27           | + 0        | + 0        |
| Southern Vermont Piedmont | 21          | 21           | + 0        | + 0        |
| Taconic Mountains         | 11          | 11           | + 0        | + 0        |
| Vermont Valley            | 5           | 5            | + 0        | + 0        |
| <b>Totals</b>             | <b>179</b>  | <b>179</b>   | <b>+ 0</b> | <b>+ 0</b> |

#### DISTRIBUTION IN CURRENT ATLAS

| Biophysical Region        | % of region species occupies | % of all records for this species found in region |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Champlain Valley          | 100                          | 20                                                |
| Northeastern Highlands    | 100                          | 10                                                |
| Northern Green Mountains  | 100                          | 18                                                |
| Northern Vermont Piedmont | 100                          | 18                                                |
| Southern Green Mountains  | 100                          | 15                                                |
| Southern Vermont Piedmont | 97                           | 11                                                |
| Taconic Mountains         | 100                          | 6                                                 |
| Vermont Valley            | 100                          | 2                                                 |

sent from metropolitan areas of New York (McGowan 2008). Vermont, however, is still a long way from the level of urban development that may cause a noticeable decline in the species' populations. Matthews et al. (2007) predicted that the species' overall abundance will decline somewhat in response to climate change. Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine, particularly in light of increases in recent decades, that these potential threats could noticeably change Vermont's widespread and abundant population before the third atlas.

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