

## Yellow-throated Vireo

*Vireo flavifrons*

The Yellow-throated Vireo is one of the most brightly colored species within its otherwise somberly plumaged family. Its conspicuous yellow spectacles and brilliant yellow throat and breast contrast with its olive-yellow back, white underparts, and gray rump. It has two well-defined, white wing bars. The female is only slightly duller than the male.

The Yellow-throated Vireo's distribution in Vermont was not clearly defined before the Atlas Project; Spear (1976) listed its nesting status as "Irregular: questionable regularity but nesting records exist," and in the first year of the Atlas Project it was listed as an asterisked species upon which detailed reports were required. However, the species is well distributed in Vermont, occurring in more than one-third of the priority blocks in the state and in all of the physiographic regions except the Northeast Highlands. Vermont data (RVB 1973-83; Atlas Project field workers, pers. comms.) indicate that Yellow-throated Vireos are especially attracted to the rich, open woods on floodplains by rivers and streams, and are locally common within this habitat. They are also found near lakes and other bodies of water, and inhabit large shade trees along streets and in yards of towns. They occasionally live in deciduous woods away from water, but seem to require more open habitat than either the Solitary or Red-eyed vireos. Yellow-throated Vireos are found principally at low elevations.

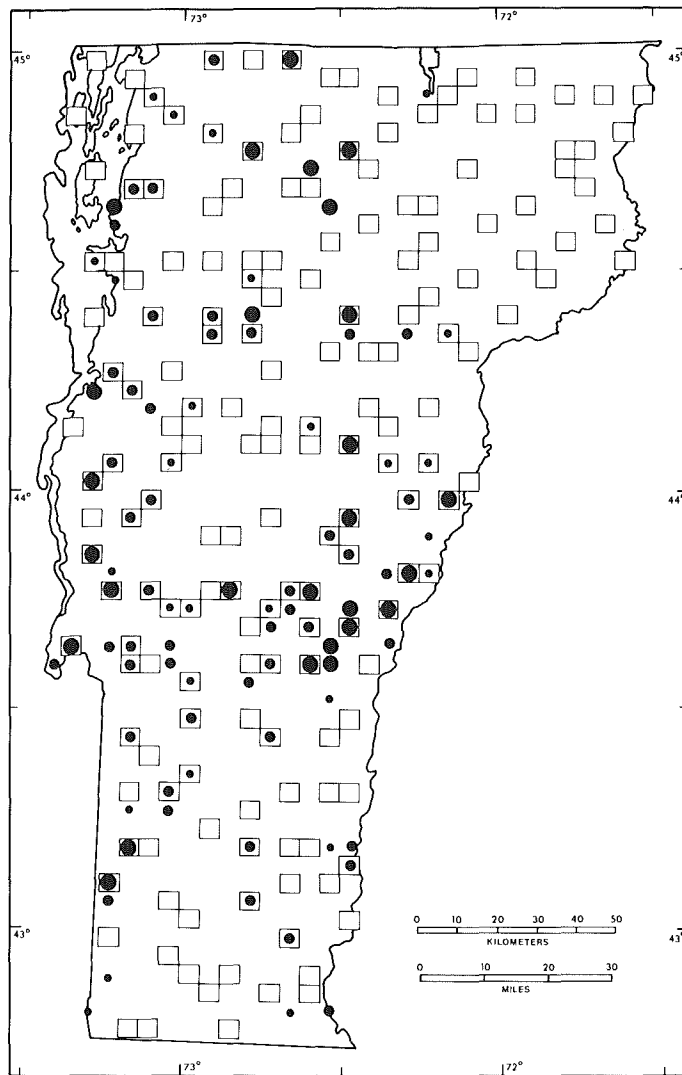
Yellow-throated Vireos move about slowly in the upper levels of trees, where they might go unnoticed but for their slow, hoarse singing. The song is phrased similarly to the Red-eyed Vireo's, but may be distinguished by its richer tonal quality. Occasional Yellow-throateds mimic the song of the Solitary Vireo (Bagg and Eliot 1937).

Yellow-throated Vireos arrive in Vermont during the first week of May. Soon after their arrival, these vireos establish territories and begin nesting. A handsome, cuplike



nest is suspended in a fork of a horizontal limb, 0.9-18.3 m (3-60 ft) above the ground—usually more than 6 m (20 ft) above—and well within the canopy. The nest, a thick-walled basket with an incurved rim, is composed of plant fibers and narrow strips of bark and similar material; it is lined with fine grasses bound together with spider silks and insect cocoons, and is well decorated on the outside with lichens, plant down, and shreds of paper. Nest building is performed mainly by the female, and takes about 1 week (Harrison 1975). The species is single-brooded. A pair observed building a nest in Washington, Vermont, on the late date of June 26 may have been attempting a second nesting after the first was destroyed. A nest in Clarendon on June 3 contained 3 eggs. A female was observed on a nest 9 m (30 ft) high in a deciduous tree on June 15, at West Rutland. Bent (1950) said that like other vireos the Yellow-throated is strongly attached to its nest. Sometimes a pair is quite aggressive when the nest is approached, and will attempt to drive away the intruder by scolding and threatening to attack.

Three to 5, usually 4, eggs are laid. They are white, smooth, slightly glossy, and spotted with brownish blotches on the larger ends. Incubation takes about 2 weeks, and is performed by both sexes. The male often sings while on the nest (Forbush 1929). The young remain in the nest for 15 days (Terres 1980); they are fed by both adults. Nests with young were found in Royalton on June 22; in Rutland County on June 25; and on



**No. of priority blocks in which recorded**

TOTAL 65 (36%)

Possible breeding: 17 (26% of total)

Probable breeding: 29 (45% of total)

Confirmed breeding: 19 (29% of total)

**Physiographic regions in which recorded**

	no. of priority blocks	% of region's priority blocks	% of species' total priority blocks
Champlain Lowlands	15	48	23.1
Green Mountains	19	35	29.2
North Central	2	10	3.1
Northeast Highlands	0	0	0
East Central	9	47	13.8
Taconic Mountains	11	69	16.9
Eastern Foothills	9	37	13.9

a backwater of the Waits River, about 9 m (30 ft) high in a young deciduous tree on July 15.

To the north, Yellow-throated Vireo breeding distribution is limited to southern Quebec and western New Brunswick. The species is widely distributed over eastern North America from southern Canada through the Great Lakes region, and south to southern Texas and northern Florida. Yellow-throated Vireos winter from southern Mexico through Central America to Colombia. They have usually left Vermont by the third week of September.

WHITNEY NICHOLS