

First record of White-eyed Vireo for the Central Valley

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The White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*) occurs commonly throughout the southeastern United States. It breeds east of the Great Plains from the southern Great Lakes region and southern New England south through eastern Texas and Florida into eastern Mexico (Farrand 1983). It winters along the Gulf coast and southern Atlantic seaboard (Root 1988) through eastern Mexico and south as far as Panama (Farrand 1983).

White-eyed Vireos are considered extremely rare north and west of the normal range, but vagrants have occurred in at least six western states: Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Arizona, Washington, and California (DeSante and Pyle 1986). There are about 43 records of this species for California, 38 of which have been accepted by the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC). The others are currently under review by the CBRC or have not yet been submitted. I here document the first record for California's Central Valley, seen in Modesto, Stanislaus County, on 1 June 1997.

At 1000 on 1 June 1997, while birding along Dry Creek in Thousand Oaks Park in central Modesto, I heard a very loud, distinctive bird song, which was certainly not that of a bird expected locally. The song began with a loud, almost explosive "chip!" followed by a quieter, down-slurred mewing note, then followed immediately by a half dozen or so loud, rapid notes, rising and falling in an emphatic warbling and ending with another exclamation point. It called twice, stopped for a minute, then began again and continued until I was able to locate it. Each time heard the song was similar and emphatic.

When first seen the bird was about 10 feet above the ground in a valley oak and only 20 feet from me, but it allowed just a brief view before flying north across Dry Creek to another large oak. I immediately recognized it as a vireo about the size of a Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*) but with more yellow and with a slightly chunkier build. It had two bold white wing bars, greenish upperparts, yellow sides, and gray underparts. The throat, lower face, and nape were light gray; the rest of the head was greenish except for bright yellow spectacles. During this brief, initial view I did not notice the white iris and did not yet positively identify it as a White-eyed Vireo due to my lack of recent experience with that species.

For the next several minutes I managed only fleeting glimpses of the bird as it actively moved around in the oak. It was still singing occasionally, but was preoccupied by a territorial Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) that was chasing all birds that came near. Finally the vireo flew back to the south side of the creek and into a California buckeye before returning to the original oak, where it remained for nearly 10 minutes and provided excellent views in good light. This time I was able to positively identify it as a White-eyed Vireo and write the description that follows:

The head was grayish-olive on the crown and upper face and gray on the nape and lower face, with the colors graduating between the two regions. Bright yellow eye-rings were very broad, and the same bright yellow through the lores and across the forehead gave a complete spectacled appearance. The iris color was very light, appearing white or whitish around the small black pupil. The bill was entirely dark and was thick, fairly broad, and had a slightly downturned appearance due to the curvature of the upper mandible and its slightly hooked tip. The upperparts were a rather uniform grayish-olive color like the crown, with only the gray nape and two bold, white wing bars in sharp contrast. The underparts were very light gray and yellow, with the yellow varying from a wash to quite bright. The sides were yellow, brightest and broadest at the breast. The yellow continued down the sides to the flanks, and there appeared to be a yellow wash on the undertail coverts but not the belly or vent area. Except where the yellow sides incurred into the breast area, the entire central region of the underparts from the throat to at least the vent area was a very light gray. The legs were dark, appearing black like the bill.

I observed the vireo over a period of about 30 minutes and it was singing intermittently the entire time. The bird was mostly within 30 feet of my position and was never more than about 75 feet away. The day was nearly calm, and morning sun from behind me provided consistently good lighting.

At 1030 I returned home to contact other birders, and several were able to observe the bird early in the afternoon and confirm its identification as a White-eyed Vireo. It was again well seen and heard, but this time only on the north side of Dry Creek. Additional observers included Eric Caine, Sherrie Reeve, Jim Gain, Maria Gain, Jim Rowoth, Margaret Williams, and Jerry Lommell.

An interesting aside is that as I entered my home prepared to contact other birders about the vireo's presence, the telephone was already ringing. On the line was Waldo Holt of Stockton calling from the location where Jim Rowoth and Margaret Williams had just found San Joaquin County's first record of Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*), which also provided Stanislaus County's first Summer Tanager record when it flew across the Stanislaus River into that county!

DISCUSSION

This observation of White-eyed Vireo was accepted by the CBRC and provides a first record for Stanislaus County and the entire Central Valley. White-eyed Vireo was first recorded in California 4-5 June 1969 on Southeast Farallon Island. Including that record, there are 11 records of this species for Northern California (as defined by the Middle Pacific Coast Region in *North American Birds*) accepted by the CBRC, with three additional records under review. There are 27 accepted records for Southern California (the Southern Pacific Coast Region), with one record currently under review and one record

published in *North American Birds* (McCaskie 1999) that has not yet been submitted to the CBRC for review (Table 1). All California records of White-eyed Vireo to date are of single birds. (Two White-eyed Vireos at the Big Sur River mouth on concurrent dates in June 2000 were not seen together and are considered separate records of single birds.)

The predominant season of occurrence of White-eyed Vireos in California is late spring, with 29 accepted records for the period from 8 May – 28 June. The majority of the California records have occurred during the last two weeks of May and the first week of June, and the 1 June date for the Stanislaus County record fits nicely into this pattern. One individual remained for the summer in Goleta, Santa Barbara County, from 18 May – 14 September 1982, and two Southern California records of singing males in July 1992 may have been summering as well. Recent records of White-eyed Vireo that may best be described as pertaining to summering individuals are of a singing male on territory at the Big Sur River mouth from 20 May through at least 17 June 2000 and an individual observed at Rancho San Diego, San Diego County, on 11 July 2000. There are only six fall records accepted for California, spanning the dates from 13 August – 30 October (Figure 1).

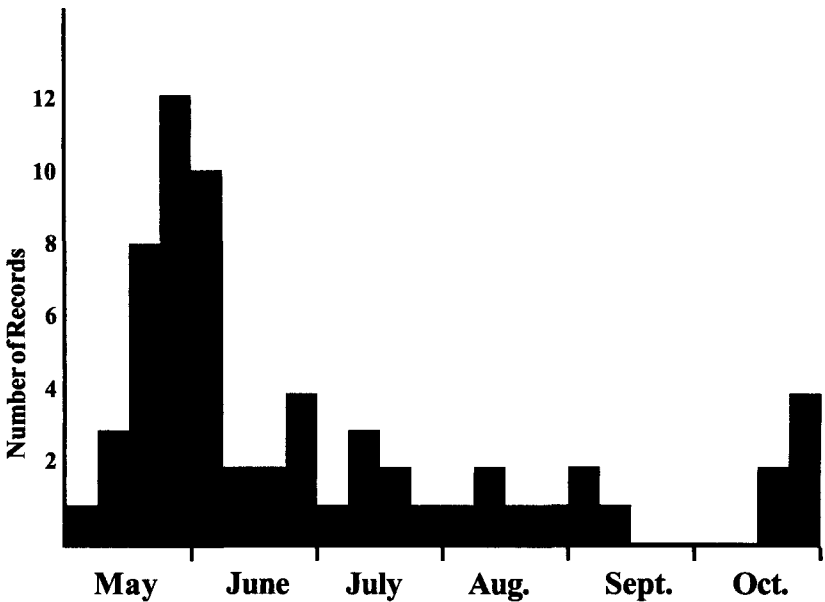


Figure 1. Seasonal distribution of California records of White-eyed Vireo accepted by the California Bird Records Committee.

Dates for each quarter month are 1-8, 9-15, 16-23, and 24 to end of month. Each record is graphed for every quarter month (or portion thereof) for the duration of the bird's stay. The graph style follows Roberson (1980).

Table 1. Records of White-eyed Vireo in California.

Northern California records			
Date	Location	County	CBRC Status*
4-5 Jun 1969	SE Farallon Island	SF	accepted (7)
7-8 Jun 1977	Point Reyes	MRN	accepted (4)
18-21 May 1978	Point Reyes	MRN	accepted (5)
19 May 1983	Point Reyes	MRN	accepted (8)
26 May-15 Jun 1985	Franks Valley	MRN	accepted (10)
2 Sep 1988	Glass Creek	MNO	accepted (13)
13-14 Aug 1992	Mono Lake	MNO	accepted (18)
21-30 Oct 1992	SE Farallon Island	SF	accepted (18)
4 Jun 1994	Big Sur River mouth	MTY	accepted (20)
1 Jun 1997	Modesto	STA	accepted (23)
27 June 1998	Point St. George	DN	accepted
18 Jun 1998	Butano Creek Watershed	SM	under review
20 May - 17 Jun 2000	Big Sur River mouth	MTY	under review
12 Jun 2000	Big Sur River mouth	MTY	under review
Southern California records			
Date	Location	County	CBRC Status*
31 May-2 Jun 1979	Oasis	MNO	accepted (5)
9 May 1981	Whitewater Canyon	RIV	accepted (7)
24-27 May 1981	Malibu Lagoon	LA	accepted (7)
18 May - 14 Sep 1982	Goleta	SBA	accepted (8)
7 Jun 1982	Pt. Loma	SD	accepted (8)
21-28 May 1985	Huntington Beach	ORA	accepted (10)
21 May 1987	Deep Springs	INY	accepted (12)
21-30 Oct 1987	Carpinteria	SBA	accepted (13)
16-30 Oct 1988	Pt. Loma	SD	accepted (13)
10 May 1992	Upper Newport Bay	ORA	accepted (18)
14-17 May 1992	Butterbredt Springs	KER	accepted (18)
24-27 May 1992	S. Fork Kern R. Preserve	KER	accepted (18)
25 May 1992	Wilmington	LA	accepted (18)
31 May 1992	Deep Springs	INY	accepted (18)
23-24 Jun 1992	Upper Arrastre Creek	SBE	accepted (18)
26-28 Jun 1992	San Juan Capistrano	ORA	accepted (18)
9-11 July 1992	China Ranch, Tecopa	INY	accepted (18)
12-17 July 1992	Camp Pendleton	SD	accepted (18)
25 Oct 1992	Pt. Loma	SD	accepted (18)
8 May 1993	Huntington Beach	ORA	accepted (19)
23 May 1993	Indian Wells Canyon	KER	accepted (19)
31 May - 1 Jun 1993	Huntington Beach	ORA	accepted (19)
6 Jun 1993	Goleta	SBA	accepted (19)
18 May 1994	Prado Basin	RIV	accepted (20)
28 May 1994	Galileo Hill	KER	accepted (20)
26 May 1997	vicinity of Cantil	KER	accepted (23)
29 May 1999	California City	KER	accepted
25 Jun 1999	Galileo Hill Park	KER	not yet submitted
11 Jul 2000	Rancho San Diego	SD	under review

*Numbers in parentheses indicate the CBRC report in which that record was published. Accepted records without numbers will be included in future CBRC reports. Much of the information in this table is from Roberson and Patten 1997.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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