

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO NEAR BIRTLE, MANITOBA

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In Manitoba few sight records of the yellow-throated Vireo have been reported from outside of its known breeding range in the extreme southern portion of the province. The town of Birtle is located 150 km north of the U.S.A. border and about 30 km east of the Saskatchewan boundary in western Manitoba. The town is situated in the Birdtail Valley along the Birdtail Creek and is about 100 - 125 km east and north of the known breeding range of the vireo.² Birtle Park is 0.75 km west of the town and just below the Birtle dam. The approximate 4 ha of the park consists of scattered Manitoba Maples (*Acer negundo*) and Green Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) and two rows of young (4 - 6 m) Spruce (*Picea* sp.) growing in the lawn area. Camping sites and cabins are located on the south edge of the park at the base of the east slope of the valley. Mature Trembling Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) ascend this slope. The west edge of the park is a picnic area under a fairly dense stand of pure aspens and Balsam Poplar (*P. balsamifera*). Water spilling over the dam through sluice gates quietly flows along the north edge of the park. A narrow strip of open grass and poplars grow between the north bank of the creek and the golf course on the other ground. Willows (*Salix* sp.) grow in profusion along both banks of the creek. In summer, Birtle Park is home to at least 30 species of breeding birds.

At Birtle Park in the later morning of 1 July 1987, a vireo-sized and shaped bird was seen facing away in a maple above the creek. With 7x binoculars I noted two distinct white wing bars, a sharp line of demarcation between a rich yellow lower breast and white belly, and a vireo bill. The bird, which did not sing at that time,

quickly flew off. The combination of field marks observed left little doubt that I had seen my first Yellow-throated Vireo. Sighting of the yellow upper breast, throat, eye ring and lores (spectacles) would be necessary to verify the species.

A bird, presumed to be the one in question, sang an unfamiliar song delivered from the canopy of the aspens on the east side of the park. The song, which was repeated, consisted of a raspy, loud "my dearie" followed by a pause, then a musical "come here" with a downward pitch. The song was also heard by Judith Walley and Isabella McLean. With each of my attempted approaches, the bird ceased to sing and flew off unobserved as witnessed by its singing from another area (the narrow strip of trees north of the creek).

In the thin, misty rain of the early morning of 2 July, the bird began to sing at 0525 h from the dense upper stratum of a stand of poplars at the west edge of the park. This time its repeated song seemed to say "here I am carry on here I am carry on," etc. Sometimes it ended its song with "free-burr" which was given twice at times. The song of the Yellow-throated Vireo has been described as a slow repetition of harsh two- or three-note phrases separated by long pauses: "de-ar-ie come-here" and is often concluded with a rising "three-eight."⁴ The singing stopped, then started up again from north of the creek.

I listened to the vireo's song from behind a large, dense willow on the east side of the creek. As the song became louder, I realized the bird had flown closer to the creek and perhaps had perched in a dead

shrub which would have no concealing leaves. Slowly I emerged from behind my "blind" and was elated to see the vireo singing from a dead willow directly across the creek 12-15 m away. For 8-10 seconds this magnificent bird was studied with its rich yellow breast, throat, eye-ring and lores clearly observed, as were its two distinct white wing bars, vireo bill and yellowish-olive back. It was one of the shyest birds I had ever encountered.

The habitat of this bird was consistent with other descriptions for its species which include: open stands of mature deciduous trees, often in residential areas; mature deciduous forest, often in river-bottom woodlands.^{2 1 3} Although this record may be the most northwesterly for Manitoba, the Yellow-throated Vireo has been identified much farther north in Saskatchewan at Nipawin and Madge Lake as well as at Moose Mountain and in the Qu'Appelle Valley in that province.²

¹ CLEVELAND, N.J., C.W. CUTHBERT, G.D. GRIEF, G.E. HOLLAND, F. HORCH, R.W. KNAPTON, R.F. KOENIG, N.F. MURDOCH, W.P. NEILY and W. WARD. 1980. Birder's guide to southeastern Manitoba. Eco Series No. 1, Manitoba Naturalists Soc., Winnipeg. 100 pp.

² GODFREY, W.E. 1986. The birds of Canada. Revised ed. National Museum of Natural Science, Ottawa. 595 pp.

³ KNAPTON, R.W. 1979. Birds of the Gainsborough—Lyleton region (Saskatchewan and Manitoba). Spec. Publ. 10, Sask. Natural History Soc., Regina. 100 pp.

⁴ SCOTT, S.L. (Ed.) 1983. Field guide to the birds of North America. National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C. 464 pp.

WHITE-EYED VIREOS IN NORTH DAKOTA

Ron Martin of Route 1, Box 59-A, Sawyer, North Dakota, 58781 sent four records of White-eyed Vireos in that state to Frank Brazier, who observed one of these birds in Regina [see *Blue Jay* 47(4):216]. Frank has kindly passed these observations along to us, but was unable to determine where they had previously been published. The sightings were as follows:

15 May 1925 at Jamestown
23 May 1925 at Wahpeton
17 May 1931 at Valley City
19 May 1961 at Bismarck

At the latter site the song of the bird is apparently recorded on 21 May by Randall. The observers were not given the other observations.