

California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Interagency Wildlife Task Group

CASSIN'S VIREO

Vireo cassinii

Family: VIREONIDAE
B554

Order: PASSERIFORMES

Class: AVES

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Former solitary vireo was recently divided into Cassin's vireo, plumbeous vireo (*V. plumbeus*), and blue-headed vireo (*V. solitarius*) (Murray et al. 1994, Johnson 1995, AOU 1997). Cassin's vireo is an uncommon to fairly common summer resident and migrant in coastal ranges the length of the state, in northeastern California, the Cascade Range, and in the Sierra Nevada. A rare but regular winter visitor, mostly on the coast. Occurs in a variety of woodland and forest habitats. *V. cassinii* is found in dry, warm forests, especially montane hardwood-conifer, montane hardwood, and ponderosa pine habitats; also in montane riparian and other habitats. Usually more common at lower elevations in mountains in breeding season (McCaskie et al. 1979). Widespread in lowlands in migration, and rare to uncommon on Channel and Farallon Islands in migration (DeSante and Ainley 1980, Garrett and Dunn 1981). A small zone of contact with the plumbeous vireo was reported in Alpine County (Johnson 1995).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Gleans insects and spiders from foliage and twigs. Sometimes hovers or hawks flying insects. Usually forages in understory and lower canopy of woodlands. Eats some fruits, leaf galls, and seeds (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

Cover: *V. cassinii* frequents oak-conifer habitats and adjacent riparian habitats. Trees and shrubs provide cover.

Reproduction: Nests in a low shrub or tree, usually 1.5 to 6.1 m (4-20 ft) above ground. Cup nest is attached at rim to fork of a horizontal branch; typically shaded in dense foliage (Harrison 1978).

Water: No information found.

Pattern: *V. cassinii* frequents woodlands with open to intermediate canopy.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity. Nocturnal migrant.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Breeders usually arrive in April and depart by mid-September. Wintering individuals occur rarely, but regularly.

Home Range: No data found. Johnston (1949) recorded 10-20 per 40 ha (100 ac) in a cut-over Douglas-fir stand in Idaho. Haldeman et al. (1973) recorded 5 pairs of the closely related *V. plumbeus* per 40 ha (100 ac) in a ponderosa pine forest in Arizona.

Territory: In an Arizona pinyon-juniper-ponderosa pine ecotone, territory of the closely related *V. plumbeus* averaged 1.7 ha (4.2 ac) (Laudenslayer and Balda 1976).

Reproduction: Breeds from mid-April to mid-August with peak activity in May and June. Lays 3-5 eggs, usually 4, which are incubated for about 11-14 days (Harrison 1978).

Niche: Adults, young, and eggs prey of accipiters, jays, small mammals, snakes. A common brown-headed cowbird host (Ehrlich et al. 1988). In the Sierra Nevada, 7 of 8 nests or family groups contained cowbirds (Rothstein et al. 1980, Verner and Ritter 1983, Airola 1986).

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