

Black-capped Vireo *Vireo atricapillus*

STATUS: Endangered (52 FR 37423-October 6, 1987) without critical habitat.

DESCRIPTION: The black-capped vireo is a 4.5-inch insectivorous bird. Males are olive green above and white below with faint yellow flanks. The crown and upper half of the head is black with a partial white eye-ring and lores. The iris is brownish-red, the bill black. Females are duller colored and have a slate gray crown and underparts washed with greenish yellow.

HABITAT: Preferred habitat consists of scattered trees and numerous dense clumps of shrubs growing to ground level, interspersed with open areas of bare ground, rock, grasses or forbs. Foliage that extends to ground level is the most important requirement for nesting. Most nests are located between 0.4 and 1.24 meters above ground level and are well-screened by foliage. Plant species commonly used as nest substrate are evergreen sumac and shin oak. Other species used include junipers, Mexican persimmon, live oak, wafer ash, silktassel, elbow bush, Texas kidneywood, yaupon, and deciduous holly. Black-capped vireo territories can be located on steep slopes, such as heads of ravines or along the sides of arroyos. On such areas, the shallow soils slow succession, and the microclimates provided by the rugged terrain perpetuate clumping of vegetation, thus sustaining an area suitable for the vireo. On level terrain, vireo habitat tends to change through succession, from prairie grass to oak-juniper woodlands.

Black-capped vireo habitat in level areas, was maintained by wildfires that kept the vegetation in an early successional stage. Total cover has been found to range from 17 to 88%. In west Texas, the vireo occurs in more stable xeric shrub associations consisting of littleleaf ash, mountain laurel, evergreen sumac, cacti, century plant, sotol, ocotillo, and beard grass, and is located primarily along steep canyons..



DISTRIBUTION:

Present: Breeds from central Oklahoma south through the Edward's Plateau, and Big Bend National Park, Texas, to central Coahuila, Mexico. Larger colonies are found on Fort Hood Military Reservation, and Devil's River and Kickapoo Caverns State Natural areas. Winters in Mexico, with most recent records from Durango, Sinaloa, Nayarit, and Jalisco. Also a few wintering reports from Guerrero, Oaxaca, and southern Sonora.

Historic: Bred from Kansas through Oklahoma and Texas to central Coahuila, Mexico.

THREATS AND REASONS FOR DECLINE: Habitat loss due to urbanization, browsing by herbivores, brush clearing, and natural succession; brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) brood parasitism, and human disturbance.

OTHER INFORMATION: Ongoing recovery projects in Texas and Oklahoma include intensive cowbird trapping, and nesting ecology and population dynamics studies. An increase in young produced/pair/year has been documented with cowbird removal. Breeding season starts about March 25 and ends about August 31 in Texas. Breeding season differs somewhat in Oklahoma. In 1991, the breeding population in Texas was estimated at about 620 pairs. Recovery Plan approved in 1991.

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