



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Black-capped Vireo

## *Oklahoma Ecological Service Field Office*

### Black-capped Vireo

*Vireo atricapilla*

#### Description

The black-capped vireo is a small (10 to 12 cm long), insect-eating, migratory songbird. Mature males are olive green above and white below with faint greenish-yellow flanks. The crown and upper half of the head is black with a partial white eye-ring. The iris is brownish-red and the bill black. The plumage of the female is duller than the male. Females have a dark slate gray head.

#### Distribution

Black-capped vireos have been documented nesting in Blaine, Cleveland, and Comanche counties of Oklahoma in recent years and sightings in Kiowa county during the nesting season indicate they may nest in suitable habitat in that county.

#### Life History

Black-capped vireos nest from Oklahoma south through central Texas to the Edwards Plateau, then south to the northern portion of Mexico. Breeding habitat is quite variable across its range, but is generally shrublands with a distinctive patchy structure. They arrive in Oklahoma in April to nest and begin to migrate to the wintering grounds on Mexico's western coast in July and are gone from Oklahoma by mid-September. Black-capped vireos may live for more than five years, and usually return year after year to the same territory. More information on the life history is available in the *Birds of North America*.



*Black-capped vireo.* © Greg Lasley

#### Conservation

The black-capped vireo was federally listed as an endangered species on October 6, 1987 (54 FR 37420). At the time of listing, the identified major threats to the black-capped vireo included habitat loss through land use conversion, grazing and browsing by domestic and wild herbivores, and brood parasitism by brown-headed cowbirds. The threat of vegetational succession appears to have been underestimated at the time of listing, although the extent of the effects on the black-capped vireo is not known.

#### What Can You Do to Help

If you own or control potential habitat near existing black-capped vireo nesting areas, please contact our office for technical and financial assistance in habitat improvement. Black-capped vireo habitat requires periodic disturbance (historically provided by fire) and active management is necessary to maintain quality nesting habitat. Avoid disturbing nesting areas from April to September.

#### References

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1991. *Black-capped Vireo (Vireo atricapillus) Recovery Plan*

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. *Black-capped Vireo 5-Year Review 07/26/2007*

*Birds of North America*

#### For Further Information

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