

Observations of A Black-whiskered Vireo on the Mississippi Coast

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On 9 April 1982 at about 09:00 Larry Gates observed at close range through 7 X 35 binoculars, a Black-whiskered Vireo (Vireo altiloquus) moving about in a leisurely manner through a yaupon (Ilex) thicket on a sand dune at Bellefontaine Beach, Jackson County, Mississippi. After about 2 minutes of observation, the bird flew into a nearby, rather small live oak (Quercus virginiana) where it was observed at eye level, with no obstructions, in excellent light, from a distance of no more than 5 m by Terrie and Larry Gates, Judith Toups, and Joe Magee. The bird closely resembled a Red-eyed Vireo (Vireo olivaceus) except that it had 2 thin, but quite distinct black streaks, one on each side of the chin. The bird also appeared to have a larger bill than a Red-eyed Vireo. After a minute or 2, the bird flew off and could not be relocated. At about 04:00 Judith Toups found what was probably the same bird in a nearby live oak. This time the bird was about 8 m up in the tree.

On the next day (10 April 1982) John Izral, having no knowledge of this first sighting, found another Black-whiskered Vireo in a patch of woods adjacent to the Mississippi Sound a little over a mile from the first sighting. Izral studied this bird for about 10 minutes, using 7 X 50 binoculars; he was often as close as 6 m from the bird. He also observed distinct lines on either side of the chin. This bird moved about the lower levels of the trees (mostly oaks) in a manner similar to that of nearby Red-eyed Vireos.

On 10 April, Peggy and Jack Smith, who did know about the first sighting by Gates et al., reported seeing a Black-whiskered Vireo very close to the first location.

On 11 April 1982, Margaret Halstead, who lives near the beach in Ocean Springs, Mississippi and had no knowledge of any of these sightings, observed a Black-whiskered Vireo in her yard.

These sightings are the first reports of Black-whiskered Vireo for the state of Mississippi. There are numerous other records of this subtropical species for the northern Gulf Coast, especially in Spring (Imhof 1976, Lowery 1974).

Literature Cited

- Imhof, T.A. 1976. Alabama Birds. 2nd ed. University of Alabama Press, University.
Lowery, G.H. Jr. 1974. Louisiana Birds. 3rd ed. Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge.