

ANTIPHONAL SINGING IN THE YELLOW-THROATED VIREO

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Duet singing is fairly common in tropical birds world wide. Males and females may sing the same song together, different songs, or different parts of the same song alternately (Terres 1980). When birds sing alternately, the duet is referred to as antiphonal singing. Among North American birds, the Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*) is an antiphonal singer (Peer and Bollinger 1997). I present an observation here of the Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*) also using this behavior.

On 5 April 1997, in a hardwood forest approximately eight miles south of Vicksburg, Warren County, Mississippi, I observed two Yellow-throated Vireos duetting. The birds were alternately singing different parts of their primary song (Rodewald and James 1996). One bird sang the first ascending-pitch phrase of the song, and the other sang the second descending pitch phrase. To me this song was indistinguishable from any other Yellow-throated Vireo's primary song. The birds were observed in this behavior for about two minutes, during which they sang continuously and moved about in the lower canopy about five to 15 feet apart from one another.

Antiphonal singing has not been previously recorded in Yellow-throated Vireos (James 1978, 1984, Rodewald and James 1996). The primary song of the Yellow-throated Vireo is used while the birds are involved in many different activities: territory establishment and defense, mate attraction, pair formation, nest construction, as part of maintenance of contact between a mated pair, during courtship and copulation, at nest exchanges, and during contact with young birds. Only males are known to sing the primary song (James 1984). This duet could have been part of pair formation or territory establishment, since Yellow-throated Vireos had been in the Vicksburg area for only about two weeks and these would be expected behaviors. However, both of these functions would require a female to be part of the duetting pair.

This isolated observation does not establish antiphonal singing as a common behavior in Yellow-throated Vireos. Additional observations will be required to determine the frequency of this behavior.

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