

alert themselves to vagrant forms of vireos from the Pacific coast, with the result that most observers of the Illinois "Cassin's Vireo" (myself included) dismissed the bird at first as an exceptionally drab "Blue-headed Vireo" singing an abnormal song. It was not until the third day of the bird's presence that Thomas Schulenberg of the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, voiced his initial suspicion that we might have a *rare avis* in our midst.

The audience for out-of-range "subspecies" of vireos proved small enough that, when the bird was announced on the Chicago bird alert, there were no throngs of eager listeners searching for the bird. As far as I'm aware, no one showed up.

Visually and vocally, this bird was aberrant as a "Blue-headed Vireo" on precisely those points which apparently make it typical of the Pacific coast form.

The bird looked like a drab "Blue-headed Vireo" with duller white throat and underparts and duller yellow wash to the sides of the upper breast. Most importantly, the head was olive green overall, washed with gray. The gray was strongest on the forehead, and absent from the nape.

It is worth emphasizing that the head was essentially olive green, and that the gray on the head was nothing more than a dull wash. This olive ground color was strong enough that a pair of novice birders matched this bird to Bell's Vireo in the 1980 Peterson field guide, specifically ruling out Solitary Vireo because "that species has a gray head."

No immediate yardsticks for comparison of size and proportions were available at the times of observation, but a few hours after my parting views of the "Cassin's Vireo" on 5 May, I studied a typical "Blue-headed Vireo". My impression was that this was a somewhat less compact bird than the "Cassin's," appearing a little larger, with a slightly longer, more slender bill. By contrast, the "Cassin's" struck me as more akin to White-eyed Vireo (*V. griseus*) in size and "jizz".

Photograph #3 in Farrand 1988 (*Western Birds: An Audubon Handbook*) provides a very good match to the Jackson Park bird, although our bird may have been even less gray on the head than the individual pictured. Note especially the distribution of gray there - strongest on the forehead and wanting on the nape, as in the Jackson Park individual.

The bird sounded like a Yellow-throated Vireo (*V. flavifrons*) - enough so that the song was assigned to that species by four independent parties (all of whom retracted their identification with some dismay upon seeing the "Cassin's Vireo" singing). Compared with typical songs of "Blue-headed Vireo", the song was lower in pitch, burry

rather than sweet, with much longer pauses between phrases. As the bird was still singing early in the morning 5 May, I made a return trip to the field armed with a tape recorder. However, the bird could not be relocated, even using playbacks of "Blue-headed", "Cassin's" and Yellow-throated Vireo songs.

Two caveats bear on this bird's identity. The first is that "wrong-song" acquisition is attested among vireos including "Blue-headed Vireo" singing the song of Yellow-throated Vireo (See Bent, 1950, *Life Histories of North American Wagtails, Shrikes, Vireos, and Their Allies*, page 300). The second caveat is that plumage variation within the Solitary Vireo complex remains imperfectly known. Female Blue-headed Vireos may approximate the patterning of "Cassin's Vireo" closely enough to render sight records indeterminable (Ned K. Johnson, *vide* Schulenberg). Whether or not the same applies to spring males is beyond the research I have undertaken for this summary.

Previous out-of-range occurrences for "Cassin's Vireo" include specimen records for New York and New Jersey (Phillips 1991). A hypothetical Louisiana out-of-range specimen was also reported (*American Birds* 42:90).

The bird was seen and heard by about a dozen experienced observers, including Sue Friscia, John Harshman, Robert Hughes, Harriet Rylaarsdam, Thomas Schulenberg, Sherman Suter, Peg Walsh, and others. All of us found the bird anomalous as a "Blue-headed Vireo". None had had recent field experience with "Cassin's Vireo", although Schulenberg had researched variation in Solitary Vireos in connection with his thoroughly documented record of a "Plumbeous Vireo" at Jackson Park 30 September 1989. Only three observers - Hughes, Schulenberg, and I - had a chance to view this bird with "Cassin's Vireo" specifically in mind. Our consensus was that all aspects of the bird were consonant with what we knew of typical individuals of that form over "Blue-headed Vireo".

In any event, the probability of occurrence of an out-of-range "Cassin's Vireo" seems greater than that of an under-colored, under-sized "Blue-headed Vireo" learning the wrong song.

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— Paul R. Clyne

5538 S. Blackstone Ave., Chicago IL 60637.

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