

LEAST BELL'S VIREO (VIREO BELLII PUSILLUS)

Federal/California status: Endangered/Endangered



Description

Least Bell's vireo is a small, nondescript bird approximately 4.75 inches (12.1 cm) in length. It has an overall grayish coloration, white underparts, a grayish wash to the breast, and an occasional light yellow wash on the sides. The faint white wing bars and indistinct white spectacles help distinguish this vireo.

Habitat

Least Bell's vireo inhabits dense, low brush near water. Its diet consists mainly of insects, particularly large insects such as grasshoppers, beetles, and wasps. It typically forages amongst the foliage of riparian thickets, picking insects off the leaves and twigs. Nests are usually built in the fork of a slender branch, approximately 2-5 feet above the ground. The nest is a small, hanging cup comprised of grass, weeds, leaves, and strips of bark.

Range/distribution

Historically, this subspecies was a common to abundant summer resident in the riparian habitat of the San Joaquin Valley. Destruction of its preferred habitat and high levels of cowbird parasitism have almost completely extirpated it from its former range in the Valley.

Photo: U.S. Forest Service, URL: <http://www.r5.fs.fed.us/cleveland/res/vibepu2.htm>, accessed September 11, 2002.

References

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- Grinnell, J., and A. Miller. 1944. The Distribution of the Birds of California. Cooper Ornithological Club, Berkeley, CA. 617 pp.
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