

## THE SOLITARY VIREO, OR GREENLET.

+VIREO SOLITARIUS, *Vieill.*

PLATE CCXXXIX.—MALE AND FEMALE.

This, reader, is one of the scarce birds that visit the United States from the south, and I have much pleasure in being able to give you an account of it, as hitherto little or nothing has been known of its history.

It is an inhabitant of Louisiana during the spring and summer months, when it resorts to the thick cane-brakes of the alluvial lands near the Mississippi, and the borders of the numberless swamps that lie in a direction parallel to that river. It is many years since I discovered it, but as I am not at all anxious respecting priority of names, I shall not insist upon this circumstance. In the month of May 1809, I killed a male and a female of this species, near the mouth of the Ohio, while on a shooting expedition after young Swans. The following spring, I killed a female near Henderson in Kentucky. In 1821, I again procured a pair, with their nest and eggs, near the mouth of Bayou La Fourche, on the Mississippi, and since that period have killed eight or ten pairs.

The nest is prettily constructed, and fixed in a partially pensile manner between two twigs of a low bush, on a branch running horizontally from the main stem. It is formed externally of grey lichens, slightly put together, and lined with hair, chiefly from the deer and racoon. The female lays four or five eggs, which are white, with a strong tinge of flesh-colour, and sprinkled with brownish-red dots at the larger end. I am inclined to believe that the bird raises only one brood in a season.

The manners of this bird are not those of the Titmouse, Flycatcher, or Warbler, but partake of those of all three. It has the want of shyness exhibited in the Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireo. It hangs to bunches of small berries, feeding upon them as a Titmouse does on buds of trees; and again searches amongst the leaves and along the twigs of low bushes, like most of the Warblers. On the other hand, it differs from all these in their principal habits. Thus, it never snaps at insects on the wing, although it pursues them; it never attacks small birds and kills them by breaking in their skulls, as the Titmouse does; nor does it hold its prey under its foot in the way of the Yellow-throated Vireo, a habit which allies the latter to the Shrikes.



*Solitary Vireo or Greenlet.*

1. Male. 2. Female.

*American Cane. Miegia macrosperma.*

Drawn from Nature by J. J. Audubon F.R.S.F.L.S.

Litho Printed & Col<sup>d</sup> by J. T. Bowen Phil.



The flight of this bird is performed by a continued *tremor* of the wings, as if it were at all times angry. It seldom rises high above its favourite cane-brakes, but is seen hopping up and down about the stems of low bushes and the stalks of the canes, silently searching for food, more in the manner of the Worm-eating Warbler than in that of any other bird known to me. Their confidence at the approach of man is very remarkable. They look on without moving until you are within a few feet, and retire only in proportion as you advance towards them. In this respect it resembles the White-eyed Vireo.

When wounded by a shot, it remains quite still on the ground, opens its bill when you approach it, and bites with all its might when laid hold of, although its strength is not sufficient to enable it to inflict a wound. I have never heard it utter a note beyond that of a querulous low murmuring sound, when chasing another bird from the vicinity of its nest. The young all leave the nest, if once touched, and hide among the grass and weeds, where the parents continue to feed them. I once attempted to feed some young birds of this species, but they rejected the food, which consisted of flies, worms, and hard-boiled eggs, and died in three days without ever uttering a note. In 1829, I shot one of these birds, a fine male, in the Great Pine Swamp in Pennsylvania.

This species is an inhabitant of the Columbia river district, where several specimens were procured by Mr. TOWNSEND. I found it abundant in Maine, and it reaches Pictou in Nova Scotia, beyond which I saw none on my way to Labrador. We found it in the Texas, arriving from farther south late in April. My friend Dr. BACHMAN informs me that it is "every year becoming more abundant in South Carolina, where it remains from about the middle of February to that of March, keeping to the woods. It has a sweet and loud song of half a dozen notes, heard at a considerable distance." Mr. NUTTALL has favoured me with the following notice respecting it:—

"About the beginning of May, in the oaks already almost wholly in leaf, on the banks of the Columbia, we heard around us the plaintive deliberate warble of this species, first mentioned by WILSON. Its song seems to be intermediate between that of the Red-eyed and Yellow-breasted species, having the *preai, preai*, &c. of the latter, and the fine variety of the former in its tones. It darted about in the tops of the trees, incessantly engaged in quest of food, and now and then disputing with some rival. The nest of this bird is made much in the same manner as that of *Vireo olivaceus*. One which I examined was suspended from the forked twig of the wild crab-tree, at about ten feet from the ground. The chief materials were dead and whitened grass-leaves, with some cobwebs agglutinated together as usual, externally scattered with a few shreds of moss (*Hypnum*) to resemble the

branch on which it hung; here and there were also a few of the white paper-like capsules of the spider's nest, and it was lined with fine blades of grass and slender root fibres. The situation, as usual, was open, but shady."

SOLITARY FLYCATCHER, *Muscicapa solitaria*, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. ii. p. 143.

VIREO SOLITARIUS, Bonap. Syn., p. 79.

SOLITARY VIREO OR FLYCATCHER, *Vireo solitarius*, Nutt. Man., vol. ii. p. 305.

SOLITARY FLYCATCHER OR VIREO, *Vireo solitarius*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. i. p. 147; vol. v. p. 432.

Upper parts light olive-green, head greyish-blue; lower white, the sides greenish-yellow; eyelids and a band of white from the bill over the eye; a dusky spot before the eye; quills and coverts brownish-black; two bands of white on the wing, formed by the tips of the secondary coverts and first row of small coverts; primaries narrowly edged with yellowish-green, secondaries broadly with white; tail-feathers brownish-black, the outer edged with white; head and sides of neck inclining to greyish-blue.

Male,  $5\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $8\frac{1}{2}$ .

From Texas to Nova Scotia, rather abundant. Rare in the interior. Columbia river. Migratory.

#### THE AMERICAN CANE.

MIEGIA MACROSPERMA, *Pursh*, Fl. Amer., vol. i. p. 59.—ARUNDINARIA MACROSPERMA, *Mich.*, Fl. Amer., vol. i. p. 74.—TRIANDRIA MONOGYNIA, *Linn.*—GRAMINEÆ, *Juss.*

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### THE WHITE-EYED VIREO, OR GREENLET.

+VIREO NOVEBORACENSIS, *Gmel.*

PLATE CCXL.—MALE.

This interesting little bird enters the State of Louisiana often as early as the 1st of March. Indeed, some individuals may now and then be seen a week or ten days sooner, provided the weather be mild. It throws itself into the thickest part of the briars, sumachs, and small evergreen bushes,



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Drawn from Nature by J. J. Audubon F.R.S.F.L.S.

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Audubon, John James. 1842. "The Solitary Vireo, or Greenlet, Vireo solitarius, Vieill. [Pl. 239]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 4, 144–146. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319352>.

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