Separating Blue-headed and Cassin’s Vireos

Comments on winter 2010-2011 Ensenada and Point Loma Blue-headed Vireos

Peter Pyle
Blue-headed vs. Cassin’s Vireos

First-year female BHVI

Adult male CAVI

Dullest HY/SY female BHVI (top, MVZ 43406, SC, 26 Sep 1895) and brightest AHY/ASY male CAVI (MVZ 87287, Tulare County, CA, 30 Aug 1943) at MVZ. Head color in the overlap area is dull blue, breast is medium-bright white, and flanks are medium-dull yellow.
Blue-headed vs. Cassin’s Vireos

Duller female
BHVI

Adult male
CAVI
Blue-headed vs. Cassin’s Vireos

Thus, once age and sex is determined, the two species are more-easily separated.

It is best to age birds first, then assess sex and species simultaneously.

Crisp digital images allow successful ageing and species diagnosis.
Blue-headed vs. Cassin’s Vireos

First-year

Primary coverts brown, contrasting with greater coverts

Adult

Primary coverts dusky, not contrasting with greater coverts

Block pattern
Blue-headed vs. Cassin’s Vireos

Fresh fall

Adult

First-year

Worn spring
Blue-headed vs. Cassin’s Vireos

First-year Male BHVI

Point Loma (San Diego)
5 Jan 2011
Blue-headed vs. Cassin’s Vireos

Adult Male CAVI

Indistinct malar

Montana, 31 August 2012
Blue-headed vs. Cassin’s Vireos

Adult Female BHVI

New York
12 September 2012

Distinct malar
Blue-headed vs. Cassin’s Vireos

First-year Male BHVI

Ensenada, Baja California Norte, 31 December 2010
Blue-headed vs. Cassin’s Vireos

Adult Male CAVI

Reno, 1 Sep 2013
Blue-headed vs. Cassin’s Vireos
First-year Male BHVI

But beware *lucasanus* CAVI

Vizcaino, Baja
19 October 2011
Blue-headed vs. Cassin’s Vireos

Adult Male CAVI

San Diego
21 October 2011

Indistinct malar
Blue-headed vs. Cassin’s Vireos

First-year Male

Encinitas, CA
2 April 2014