

Orange-crowned Warbler, but I had seen that bird many times, and I knew it wasn't that one. It slowly dawned on me that I was looking at a "new" species of bird—one I had never seen before. It's always an exhilarating feeling—like discovering a new little hideaway—and I watched this small bird for a few moments, trying to etch its image into my brain so I could look at a guide later and identify it.

Finally, this "warbler" flew off, and as I followed it with my binoculars, it flew directly to an alder tree and landed on a nest about ten feet up, much to my surprise. Since this tree was less than 100 yards away from me, I walked carefully to it until I stood below the nest. The bird peered over the edge at me with only a moderate dose of nervousness, and I saw that the nest was a delicate mixture of moss, lichens, and other small plant materials woven together with spider's silk. It was suspended quite neatly between two small forked branches a few feet out from the trunk, and viewed from below it looked like a little ball of moss.

I suspected that the bird was actually in the egg-laying process, and I was a little surprised by its boldness in going straight to the nest. I also knew enough from my guidebooks that I was viewing a vireo nest, so all I needed to do was look up the three remaining vireo species (I knew it wasn't a Red-eyed Vireo) that could be found in the Chemainus area and I'd have a positive identification.

I left the vireo to tend to its eggs and marked the spot with surveyor's tape before walking out of the forest. I find it useful to mark nest trees this way, as the orange tape is highly visible and gets me back to the nests much more quickly. I was excited at the prospect of being able to photograph a brand new species; on the other hand, shooting a nest ten feet above the ground is no easy task and requires a lot of scaffolding, ingenuity, and, worst of all, hard work.

When I got home, I discovered I had found a Warbling Vireo nest. I found it rather ironic that within 60 seconds of seeing the vireo for the first time I had also found its nest. If only other species were so accommodating!

Over the next few days I checked on the vireo nest to see if the female was incubating. Sometimes when I checked, she was on the nest and sometimes she wasn't, which led me to believe that I had indeed found the nest during the egg-laying process. Since this can be a rather sensitive time for most birds, I kept my distance when spying on the nest.

In the meantime, I continued to search the area for nests of other species. Although I did find several other nests, the most rewarding discovery for me was another Warbling Vireo nest about eight feet high in a willow tree. This nest was newly made and had no eggs in it when

I found it on June 5. It was similar in composition to the first nest and resembled a mossy baseball hanging from the twigs. I now had two vireo nests to monitor and hopefully photograph, however daunting the task.

On June 10, I checked the first vireo nest to find the female happily incubating. The second nest contained a creamy-coloured egg with sparse tiny black. My spirits boosted, I went home confident that, come what may, I'd get at least one photograph between the two nests.

By June 18, the second vireo nest contained four vireo eggs. Not wanting to tempt fate, I left the nest alone after making my quick observation. The first vireo nest had what appeared to be two small young, so I knew that I could begin shooting it any day.

I wrapped up shooting a nearby Swainson's Thrush nest and then spent most of June 22 setting up one level of scaffolding beside the vireo nest tree. To understand the enormity of the task I had, one must first realize that scaffolding is heavy and awkward to carry even on level ground. On top of that, I had to traverse several hundred yards of thick brush—while carrying the scaffolding in pieces—which meant that by the end of the day

Co-operative in feeding, both parent vireos masticate food for their young.

