

No. 22AP001468

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**In the Wisconsin Court of Appeals**  
DISTRICT IV

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ASSOCIATED BUILDERS & CONTRACTORS OF WISCONSIN, INC.,  
Et. Al.,  
PLAINTIFFS-APPELLANTS,  
v.  
CITY OF MADISON,  
DEFENDANT-RESPONDENT

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**On Appeal from the Dane County Circuit Court**  
**The Honorable Nia Trammell, Presiding**  
**Case No. 2021CV001729**

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**MOTION FOR LEAVE TO FILE BRIEF *AMICI CURIAE* OF**  
**AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY,**  
**MADISON AUDUBON SOCIETY, AND**  
**WISCONSIN SOCIETY FOR ORNITHOLOGY**  
**IN SUPPORT OF DEFENDANT-RESPONDENT**

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American Bird Conservancy, Madison Audubon, and Wisconsin Society for Ornithology (collectively (“*Amici*”)) hereby move the Court for leave to file the attached brief as *amici curiae* in the above-referenced matter. Neither the Appellant-Plaintiff or the Respondent-Defendant object to this motion and the filing of the accompanying brief.

American Bird Conservancy is a national membership-based nonprofit corporation dedicated to conserving wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. This mission has guided the organization for more than 25 years. ABC works to halt the extinction of birds, conserve habitats, and eliminate threats to birds. It is the leading organization in studying the impact of window strikes on bird mortality and researching alternatives, including studying the effectiveness of bird-safe window and door glass.

Madison Audubon Society is a chapter of the National Audubon Society and has more than 3500 members whom it represents in 10 southern Wisconsin counties. It is a regional leader in conservation of birds in the Midwest and uses the best available science to inform its programs and actions in habitat restoration, research, advocacy, and citizen science. The Madison Audubon “Bird Collision Corps” (BCC) citizen-science project was launched in 2018 to monitor bird-window collisions in Madison. BCC partners include UW-Madison, Dane County Humane Society’s Wildlife Center, American Bird Conservancy, and local businesses. Data collected to date suggest high rates of window-caused bird mortality that are consistent with published studies. These data are also being used by local partners, businesses, and homeowners to inform pre-construction design and treatment of existing glass that incorporate a variety of bird-safe solutions.

The Wisconsin Society for Ornithology is a statewide nonprofit organization with approximately 1150 members from throughout Wisconsin. Established in 1939 it is devoted to the enjoyment, study, and conservation of Wisconsin's birds. Among its many activities to promote the study and conservation of birds, it coordinates with avian experts in academia and public and private agencies and organizations and publishes a quarterly scientific journal, *The Passenger Pigeon*. The Society has an active bird conservation agenda, including the promotion of bird-safe window and door glass.

*Amici* are well-informed about the issues presented in this case and interested in the outcome. In their appeal, Appellants-Plaintiffs ask the Court to declare that Madison's "Bird-Safe Glass Requirements" ordinance, Madison General Ordinance § 28.129, is unlawful and void, and enjoin the city from enforcing the ordinance. Doing so will eliminate an important tool that is proven to protect birds and will contribute to the increasing decline in bird populations.

*Amici* can provide relevant analysis to this Court given their interest in the issues presented and their expertise regarding the legal and scientific underpinnings of Respondent-Defendants' actions and Appellant-Plaintiffs' challenge thereto.

*Amici* seek to file an *amicus* brief to inform the Court about the statutory, regulatory, and scientific framework surrounding the precipitous decline in bird populations and the important role bird-safe glass has in protecting birds from mortality as a result of striking windows and to present the Court with the potential consequences of invalidating the ordinance.

*Amici* all have active bird conservation and protection initiatives and recognize the importance of bird-safe glass in preventing bird collisions which kill or injure birds.

Counsel for *Amici* has conferred with counsel for Plaintiffs and Defendants regarding their position on this motion. None of the parties to this action oppose the motion.

WHEREFORE, American Bird Conservancy, Madison Audubon, and Wisconsin Society for Ornithology respectfully request that the Court grant their motion for leave to file the *amicus curiae* brief attached hereto.

Respectfully submitted this 13th day of January, 2023.

Law Office of Peter E. McKeever

*signed electronically Peter E. McKeever*

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No. 22AP001468

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DISTRICT IV

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ASSOCIATED BUILDERS & CONTRACTORS OF WISCONSIN, INC.,  
COMMERCIAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS WISCONSIN, INC.,  
NAIOP WISCONSIN CHAPTER, INC., WISCONSIN BUILDERS  
ASSOCIATION, AND WISCONSIN REALTORS ASSOCIATION, INC.,  
PLAINTIFFS-APPELLANTS,

v.

CITY OF MADISON,  
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**BRIEF *AMICI CURIAE* OF**  
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**IN SUPPORT OF DEFENDANT-RESPONDENT**

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**Under Section (Rule) 809.19(7)**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The American Bird Conservancy, Madison Audubon Society, and the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology are nonprofit organizations dedicated to the appreciation, understanding, and conservation of birds and their habitats. We file this brief *amici curiae*, with the consent of the

parties, to bring to the Court's attention the grave environmental context in which the Ordinance at issue in this case was enacted.

We show below (a) that the Earth is undergoing an unparalleled, mass extinction of plant and animal species as a result of human activity, (b) that the United States has lost **3 billion breeding birds** in the last 50 years, (c) that anthropomorphic causes account for nearly all of those losses, (d) that collisions with glass windows in buildings kill up to **1 billion** birds across the United States every year; (e) that those collisions can be largely avoided using proven building design elements; and (f) that Madison is one of numerous cities in the Country that have enacted legislation designed to drastically reduce the number of bird deaths caused by buildings.

Upholding Madison's Ordinance will not harm the plaintiffs, because it applies to all builders equally, disadvantaging none vis-à-vis any other. Plaintiffs presented no evidence below of any adverse financial impact on any of them. Moreover, the ordinance does not prevent developers from using glass meeting the minimum standards in the uniform building code. They simply must use one of the many solutions available to make the glass better for birds.

Finally, plaintiffs have no standing to speak for their customers – the citizens of Madison – who have spoken through their duly elected officers in favor of the Ordinance and in willing acceptance of any possible increases in costs to save the lives of birds.

Invalidating the Ordinance, on the other hand, will mean the continuation of countless *preventable* bird deaths.

## **1. The Anthropocene Mass Extinction**

Scientists around the world agree that we are now in the Earth's sixth episode of mass extinction.<sup>1</sup> In May 2019, the United Nations-created Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services released a Report concluding that we are experiencing an unprecedented mass extinction that is caused by human factors. Nearly 150 authors from 50 nations worked for three years to compile the Report. Representatives of each of the 132 member nations (including the US) signed off on its findings. It concludes that *1,000,000* plant and animal species are on the verge of extinction, a rate of decline that is unparalleled in Earth's history and threatens grave collateral impacts on peoples around the world.<sup>2</sup>

Those dire findings – that the actions of *Homo sapiens* are causing the extinction of other species on Earth at massive levels – mirror the conclusions drawn by scientists who study bird populations.

## **2. Three Billion Birds Lost.**

In less than a single human lifetime, 2.9 billion breeding birds have been lost from the United States and Canada, across every ecosystem and including familiar birds. For example, Dark-eyed Junco and White-throated Sparrow populations have declined by 175 million and 93 million, respectively. This means that we have lost more than a quarter of our birdlife since 1970.

These findings were reported in 2019 in the leading scientific journal, *Science*, by researchers at seven institutions, including American

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., *The Sixth Extinction: an Unnatural History*, Elizabeth Kolbert (2014).

<sup>2</sup> Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services (summary for policy makers). IPBES Plenary at its seventh session (IPBES 7, Paris, 2019). Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3553579>

Bird Conservancy.<sup>3</sup> This was the first study to assess net population changes across 529 breeding bird species in the United States and Canada. The researchers analyzed birds on a group-by-group basis, allowing them to identify declines among species that use similar habitats. The findings included 48 years of data from multiple independent sources, including the North American Breeding Bird Survey and the Christmas Bird Count. A comprehensive analysis of 11 years of data from 143 NEXRAD radar stations showed a similarly steep decline in the magnitude of bird migration.<sup>4</sup>

The study showed that –

- Forests have lost 1 billion birds since 1970.
- Grassland birds were reduced by 53% — more than 720 million birds.
- Aerial insectivores — birds like swallows, nighthawks, and flycatchers — are down by 32%, or 160 million.
- Coastal shorebirds, already at dangerously low numbers, lost more than one-third of their population.
- The volume of birds in spring migration has dropped by 14% in just the last decade.

Further, in 2020, the National Audubon Society released a scientific study, *Survival By Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink*, showing that

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<sup>3</sup> *SCIENCE*, 19 Sep 2019, Vol 366, Issue 6461, pp. 120-124 ;[DOI: 10.1126/science.aaw1313](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aaw1313). [The participating organizations were the Cornell Lab of Ornithology; American Bird Conservancy; Environment and Climate Change, Canada; the US Geological Survey; Bird Conservancy of the Rockies; and the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute.](#)

<sup>4</sup> The Next Generation Weather Radar (NEXRAD) system is a network of 160 high-resolution S-band Doppler weather radars jointly operated by the National Weather Service, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the U.S. Air Force.



two thirds of North American Birds are at risk of extinction because of global warming and other human activities.<sup>5</sup>

This spectacular decline in North American bird populations over the past 50 years has taken place despite the focused and prodigious efforts of over 200 bird conservation and ornithological organizations in the US alone.<sup>6</sup> Obviously more must be done. Individuals, businesses, and municipalities can help turn the tide in the ongoing, essential battle to conserve birds.

### **3. Human Activity Is the Primary Cause**

Habitat loss is generally considered the principal cause of the staggering decline in bird populations,<sup>7</sup> but other anthropocentric causes play a significant role. As the Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service has stated:

Millions of acres of bird habitat are lost or degraded every year due to development, agriculture, and forestry practices. These rapidly accelerating impacts can be mitigated only through habitat restoration and protection. In addition, millions of birds are directly killed by human-caused sources such as collisions with man-made structures.<sup>8</sup>

### **4. One Billion Birds Collide with Glass Every Year in the US**

According to the Fish and Wildlife Service, “[e]very year, nearly one billion birds die following collisions with glass in the U.S.,”<sup>9</sup> because

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.audubon.org/climate/survivalbydegrees>.

<sup>6</sup> The Bird Conservation Alliance has over 200 members comprised of public and federal and state governmental organizations committed to bird conservation. *See* <https://abcbirds.org/get-involved/bird-conservation-alliance>.

<sup>7</sup> *See* <https://abcbirds.org/3-billion-birds>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.fws.gov/birds/bird-enthusiasts/threats-to-birds.php>. *See also* <https://www.fws.gov/main/fieldoffice/PDFs/mortality-fact-sheet%5B1%5D.pdf> (“Vast numbers of birds are killed due to collisions with human structures and equipment \* \* \*”).

<sup>9</sup> US Fish & Wildlife Service, citing Scott R. Loss, Tom Will, Sara S. Loss, and Peter P. Marra "Bird–building collisions in the United States: Estimates of annual mortality and

birds “don’t see glass as a barrier and don’t avoid it. They collide with glass when they see natural reflections (clouds, sky, or trees) in the glass, when they see plants through windows, and when they are attracted to landscaping or interior lights. Many birds that seem fine following window collisions can later die from internal injuries.”<sup>10</sup>

Locally, the Madison Audubon Society has monitored bird-window collisions during spring and fall bird migration periods since 2018 with its Bird Collision Corps (BCC), a partnership with UW-Madison, Dane County Humane Society’s Wildlife Center, American Bird Conservancy, and local businesses. The BCC program documents bird-window strikes at select buildings in and around Madison. Data collected to date suggest high rates of window-caused bird mortality that are consistent with published studies. For example, trained volunteers have regularly monitored 20+ buildings on the UW-Madison campus since 2018, and collectively have found nearly 1500 birds of 96 species that were victims of window strikes, the vast majority proving fatal.<sup>11</sup> Among the most common groups of birds found were warblers, sparrows, thrushes, waxwings, and hummingbirds.

The data generated by the BCC program are being used by partners, businesses, and homeowners to inform pre-construction design and treatment of existing glass that incorporate a variety of bird-safe solutions. For example, after the BCC program identified a connector walkway of a UW-Madison residence hall as a hotspot for bird-window collisions, the glass was retrofitted with bird-friendly dot decals and window collisions have since plummeted by 83%.

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species vulnerability," *The Condor* 116(1), 8-23, (2 January 2014). <https://doi.org/10.1650/CONDOR-13-090.1>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.fws.gov/story/threats-birds-collisions-buildings-glass>

<sup>11</sup> Exhibit A lists the 96 bird species.

The data from UW-Madison represent just a snapshot, a small fraction of the buildings and window collisions in the Madison area. Indeed, given Madison's unique natural features, including the abundance of water, multiple habitat types, and its location within one of the largest migratory flyways in the world (Mississippi Flyway), the Madison area attracts an incredibly high diversity of bird species. Based on the patterns observed in the BCC program and in other monitoring studies, it is likely that collisions with windows are killing *tens of thousands* of migratory birds every year in Madison.

## **5. Proven Glass Solutions and Design Strategies Are the Answer**

Many existing technologies, familiar to architects and glass companies, can be used to make new bird-friendly glass. Similarly, many existing products and systems that reduce fatal window collisions can be applied to glass that has not yet been installed or to glass already in place in a building. State legislatures, city councils, town boards, and other municipal bodies around the country have accordingly required the use of bird-safe glass in new and refurbished buildings (see below).

These products have been proven to reduce glass collisions. American Bird Conservancy has a glass testing program to which dozens of glass manufacturers from around the world have submitted their products.<sup>12</sup> This program has produced a list of commercially available collision-prevention glass products for new and existing buildings.<sup>13</sup> Glass manufacturers now regularly tout their products as demonstrably bird-friendly<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://abcbirds.org/glass-collisions/research-testing/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://abcbirds.org/glass-collisions/products-database/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.guardianglass.com/us/en/why-glass/build-with-glass/applications-of-glass/glass-for-facades/bird-friendly-glass>. See also <https://www.pilkington.com/en/us/products/product-categories/special-applications/pilkington-avisafe#>

In addition to bird-friendly glass, many other creative, cost-effective design strategies reduce collisions, including solar shading, avoidance of building features known to pose extreme collision risks, glass reduction, and glare reduction. These strategies often also carry additional benefits such as reduction of energy consumption.

## **6. Madison Is One of Many Local Jurisdictions Trying to Save Birds' Lives**

In 2010, the City of Toronto passed the first bird-friendly building ordinance. In 2011, the City of San Francisco adopted an ordinance and the US Green Building Council (USGBC) created a new system to put bird-friendly building designs into terms that architects can use. In partnership with American Bird Conservancy, New York City Audubon, and the Bird-Safe Building Alliance, USGBC added credit “SSpc55: Bird Collision Deterrence” to USGBC’s well-known LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification program, specifying what developers interested in building sustainable buildings can do to earn the credit. USGBC adopted the credit on the understanding that sustainable buildings shouldn’t kill wildlife. This credit is the most popular one in the LEED pilot credit library.<sup>15</sup>

The movement for bird-friendly building requirements at the state and municipal levels has been gaining steam. Twenty-seven different sets of bird-friendly building guidelines exist, with almost all in force in municipalities and states. *See* <https://abcbirds.org/glass-collisions/existing-ordinances/>. In 2019, New York City enacted the world’s best bird-friendly

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<sup>15</sup>Thousands of architects have taken American Bird Conservancy’s continuing education bird-friendly building design courses for the annual credits they need to maintain their certification through the American Institute of Architects (AIA).

building ordinance, Local Law 15, requiring all new buildings in the City, and renovations that replace significant amounts of glass, to use  $\geq 90\%$  bird-friendly glass in the first 75 feet above grade. Many other municipal bird-friendly building policies are under development across the United States and Canada.

U.S. Congressman Rep. Mike Quigley (IL) has been the driving force behind the bipartisan Bird-Safe Buildings Act in the US Congress.<sup>16</sup> The bill would require bird-friendly design for all Government Services Administration (GAS) Buildings. In partnership with American Bird Conservancy, GSA has already included bird-friendly building guidelines in its October 2021 “P100: Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service.”

### **Conclusion**

We have shown above that the Earth is undergoing an unprecedented plant and animal extinction as a result of human activity, including the loss of billions of breeding birds in the US since 1970, and that collisions with glass windows in buildings kill up to a billion birds in America every year. These collisions can be avoided entirely or greatly reduced through the use of proven building design elements, and Madison is one of numerous cities in the country that have enacted legislation designed to take advantage of them and drastically reduce the number of bird deaths. The Ordinance treats all of the Plaintiffs equally – none has provided the Court with any facts about how the Ordinance might cause it financial harm – and the citizens of Madison have decided that whatever increased costs the Ordinance may

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<sup>16</sup> “Legislation To Reduce Bird Collisions Passes The U.S. House Of Representatives.” American Bird Conservancy. July 1, 2020. Accessed July 23, 2020. <https://abcbirds.org/article/Bird-Safe-Buildings-Act-Passes-US-House-of-Representatives>

impose are worth it to save birds' lives. This is the context in which this case comes before the Court.

Finally, we note that believe that there is a strong legal argument that Plaintiffs are wrong in contending that the Madison Ordinance is preempted by Wisconsin Statute §101.02 (7r), relied on by Appellants-Plaintiffs, preempts only *safety* standards for the occupants of public buildings and places of employment. Thus, Chapter 101, governing the Department of Safety and Professional Services, provides in § 101.02(15)(j) Wis. Stats. that the Department –

shall ascertain, fix and order such reasonable standards or rules for constructing, altering, adding to, repairing, and maintaining public buildings and places of employment *in order to render them safe*. (Emphasis added.)

Because the Department can set only standards that “render [buildings] safe,” and the Madison Ordinance is not a safety standard within the meaning of Chapter 101, the Ordinance is not preempted.

Respectfully submitted

Law Office of Peter E. McKeever

*signed electronically Peter E. McKeever*

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**CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this brief conforms to the rules contained in Wis. Stat. §809.19(8)(b) and (c) for a brief produced with a proportional serif font. The length of this brief is 2305 words.

Dated this 13<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2023.

Electronically signed by: Peter E. McKeever.

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Peter E. McKeever

**CERTIFICATION REGARDING ELECTRONIC BRIEF**

I hereby certify that I have submitted an electronic copy of this brief which complies with the requirements of Wis. Stat. § 809.19(7).

I further certify that the text of the electronic copy of the brief is identical to the text of the paper copy of the brief filed as of this date.

A copy of this certificate has been served with the paper copies of this brief filed with the court and served on all opposing parties.

Dated this 13<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2023

Electronically signed by: Peter E. McKeever.

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Peter E. McKeever

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that on this 13th day of January, 2022, I caused a copy of this brief to be served upon each of the following persons via email:



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**EXHIBIT A**

**To**

**BRIEF *AMICI CURIAE***  
**OF**  
**AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY,**  
**MADISON AUDUBON SOCIETY, AND**  
**WISCONSIN SOCIETY FOR ORNITHOLOGY**  
**IN SUPPORT OF DEFENDANT-RESPONDENT**

**22AP001468**

**Window Strike Species List**

**Bird Collision Corps Program**  
**UW-Madison Campus – Spring 2108 to Fall 2022**

American Goldfinch	Brown Thrasher	Hairy Woodpecker
American Redstart	Canada Warbler	Hermit Thrush
American Robin	Cape May Warbler	House Finch
American Woodcock	Cedar Waxwing	House Sparrow
Baltimore Oriole	Chestnut-sided Warbler	House Wren
Barn Swallow	Clay-colored Sparrow	Indigo Bunting
Belted Kingfisher	Common Yellowthroat	Kentucky Warbler
Black and White Warbler	Connecticut Warbler	Least Flycatcher
Black-billed Cuckoo	Dark-eyed Junco	Lincoln's Sparrow
Black-capped Chickadee	Downy Woodpecker	Magnolia Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler	Eastern Meadowlark	Mallard
Black-throated Green Warbler	Eastern Phoebe	Mourning Dove
Blackburnian Warbler	Eastern Towhee	Mourning Warbler
Blackpoll Warbler	Eastern Wood Pewee	Nashville Warbler
Blue Jay	European Starling	Northern Cardinal
Blue-headed Vireo	Field Sparrow	Northern Flicker
Blue-winged Warbler	Fox Sparrow	Northern Parula
Brown Creeper	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Northern Waterthrush
Brown headed Cowbird	Golden-winged Warbler	Orange-crowned Warbler
	Grasshopper Sparrow	Ovenbird
	Gray Catbird	Palm Warbler
	Gray-cheeked Thrush	

Pine Siskin  
Pine Warbler  
Red-bellied  
    Woodpecker  
Red-breasted Nuthatch  
Red-eyed Vireo  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Rock Pigeon  
Rock Pigeon (feral)  
Rose-breasted Grosbeak  
Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
Ruby-throated  
    Hummingbird

Savannah Sparrow  
Scarlet Tanager  
Sharp-shinned Hawk  
Song Sparrow  
Sora  
Swainson's Thrush  
Swamp Sparrow  
Tennessee Warbler  
Tree Swallow  
Veery  
White-breasted  
    Nuthatch

White-crowned Sparrow  
White-throated Sparrow  
Wild Turkey  
Wilson's Warbler  
Winter Wren  
Wood Thrush  
Yellow Warbler  
Yellow-bellied  
    Sapsucker  
Yellow-billed Cuckoo  
Yellow-rumped Warbler  
Yellow-throated Vireo

