

Bullock's Oriole (BO)

I SAW A BRILLIANT FLASH of yellowish-orange, startling and unexpected. A male Bullock's Oriole disappeared in the foliage. The BO is a beautiful summer visitor to Eldorado. The male BO is a bright yellow-orange, with black chin, black eye stripe, the top of the neck black going down the back of the neck and back, and with black wings and a large white wing bar. The male doesn't have his full breeding colors until his second year. Adults are 12 inches long with a wingspan of 12 inches. Females are less spectacular: a dull yellow body and gray wings. BOs are classified as neotropical migrants and winter from northern South America to central Mexico. Both male and female sing frequently; each has a slightly different song. For a time, the BO and Baltimore Oriole were classified together as the Northern Oriole. These two species do interbreed where their range overlaps on the Great Plains. But hybridization is not increasing, and genetic studies suggest that the two species are not even each other's closest relative.

BOs are found around open lands usually with large trees (the ECLA parking lot is a good place to find BOs, especially in May and June). Their diet consists of insects, tree buds and nectar. During courtship the male bows and rises puffed out with wings spread. Pairs are seasonally monogamous.

Both male and female build a pendulous nest attached high on a tree limb. They take up to 15 days to build their nests, which are an elaborate construction of woven grasses, fiber strips, plant down and hair. Four to five eggs hatch in 14 days, and the young fledge in 14 days.

The BO has learned to sip nectar from humming-bird feeders. Now special feeders have been designed specifically for them. They also will forage on cut oranges placed on a raised flat area, as well as on grape jelly and meal worms. They also will take pieces of string and yarn to weave into their nests.

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If anyone would like only the text (no picture), contact me (phenline@comcast.net) and I can email a Word file.



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Male Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*). Photo licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 2.0.

—Pam Henline