

Orchard Oriole

Icterus spurius

The Orchard Oriole swaps the typical flame-orange of other orioles for a deep, burnished russet. Hopping among riverine shrubs or scattered trees, male Orchard Orioles sing a whistled, chattering song to attract yellow-green females. The smallest of North America's orioles, it gleans insects from foliage and builds hanging, pouchlike nests during its brief breeding season, and then heads back to Central America for the rest of the year. Orchard Orioles also feed on fruit and nectar in orchards, gardens, and elsewhere.



Keys to Identification

Size and Shape

Orchard Orioles are slim songbirds, larger than warblers and vireos. They have medium-length tails, rounded heads, and a straight, sharply pointed bill.

Color Pattern

Adult males are black above and rich reddish-chestnut below. They have a black head and throat, with a reddish-chestnut patch at the bend of the wing. Females are greenish yellow with two white wing bars and no black. Immature males look like females, but have black around the bill and throat.

Behavior

Orchard Orioles forage for insects in the tops of trees. They also drink nectar from flowers and, in fall, eat berries and other fruits. They sometimes visit hummingbird feeders or eat orange slices or jelly at feeding stations.

Habitat

Orchard Orioles spend summers in open woodlands and areas of scattered trees across the eastern United States and southern Canada. Look for them along river edges, in pastures with scattered trees, and in parks and orchards.

Cool Facts

- On their favorite habitats—along river edges, for example—Orchard Orioles nest in groups, often with multiple nests in a single tree. On less suitable habitats, however, they tend to be solitary.

Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 5.9 - 7.1 inches
- Wingspan - 9.8 inches
- Weight - 0.6 - 1.0 ounces