

orchard oriole *Icterus spurius*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Icteridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The orchard oriole averages six to seven inches in length (tail tip to bill tip in preserved specimen). The adult male has chestnut-colored feathers on the rump and lower side and black feathers on the remainder of the body. First year males have olive-green feathers on the upper side and yellow feathers on the lower side and have two, white wing bars and black feathers on the throat. The female and young are colored much like the first year male but without the black throat coloring.

BEHAVIORS

The orchard oriole is a common migrant and summer resident in Illinois. It lives in open woodlands, like orchards, willows along streams, brushy pastures and fence rows. It has a fast-moving song with whistles, notes and down-slurred notes at the end. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in late April. Eggs are produced in June. The nest is cuplike, usually placed at the end of branches in apple or willow trees. This nest of woven grasses is built by the female in three to six days. Four or five, light-blue eggs with dark markings are deposited by the female, and she incubates them for the entire 12- to 14-day incubation period. The male brings food to the female while she sits on the nest. The orchard oriole nest is often parasitized by the brown-headed cowbird that deposits an egg that the oriole will hatch and raise, taking food and care away from its own young. Fall migration out of Illinois begins in September. This bird winters as far south as northern Colombia and northern Venezuela. The orchard oriole eats insects and fruits.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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