

Bullock's Oriole
19 Dec 1992
Johnston, Polk Co., IA
*Dennis Thompson
IBL 63:52, 66:97

Record Number: 95-AC
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION

Dennis Thompson, 7503 Wildflower Ct.

REFERENCES

Field Report: IBL 63:52, 1993

Records Committee: IBL 66:97

VOTE: 6 NA, 1 A-D

NA on Bullock's Oriole, A-D on Bullock's/Baltimore Oriole, Occasional Baltimore Oriole can be yellow rather than orange. From the description, I don't think it is possible to say with any certainty if this was a Bullock's. Black on the sides of the face suggests Baltimore or Bullock/Baltimore intergrade.

NA, At the risk of being removed from the Records Committee, this sounds like a Scott's to me. Duluth has a confirmed summer record, so there must be occasional vagrancy. The secondhand report from near Thompson's adds to the possibility. Unfortunately, there's not enough to go on unless one argues that there is no other yellow oriole with a streaked back.

NA, The details sighted from these brief looks are not conclusive enough for me to determine what species of immature male oriole was present.

NA, Streaking on back and black extending on to face are suggestive of Baltimore/Bullock's intergrade as suggested by the observer.

NA, A brief view of an interesting oriole. I don't know enough to make an educated guess. Not sure of age or sex (not adult male). Not sure Orchard Oriole is excluded. I see no reason to call this a hybrid.

A-D, Has characteristics of Bullock's, especially large white wing bar patch.

NA, This intriguing bird probably is an intergrade of Balt & Bullock's as Dennis concluded. Otherwise, I am stumped also.

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

95-AC

1. Species Northern Oriole? (Bullocks/Baltimore Intergrade) 2. Number: 1

3. Location 7503 Wildflower Ct. Johnston, Ia. (My backyard)

4. Date: 12/19/92 + 12/20/92 5. Time Bird seen: Mid-afternoon to both days

6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field): Approximately robin-sized with a relatively thin, pointed bill. Breast bright yellow as opposed to green or orange. Extensive black on the throat, Gray-green back with dark streaks. White wing bar with extensive white in the upper wing, almost forming a wing patch. Top & back of the head was dark, but I'm not sure if it was solid black. I wasn't able to note any marks for the tail. I know this is a brief description, but I only saw the bird for a few seconds on both days.

7. Description of voice, if heard: -

8. Description of behavior: 12/19 - Lit on a suet feeder for less than a minute.

12/20 - Lit on a finch feeder for less than a minute.

9. Habitat - general: -

specific: Feeder set-up (7 feeders, no fruit) at the edge of a wooded ravine less than a mile from the Des Moines River just south of Saylorville Dam.

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain: Evening Grosbeak by the bill & color pattern. White in the wing too extensive for young Orchard Oriole. Also seemed bigger than an Orchard Oriole. Bright yellow underparts & streaked back rule out several other orioles. Immature Scott's are described as "gray-green" below.

11. Distance (how measured)? As close as 20 feet. 12. Optical equipment: Naked eye

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): Sunlight, I was looking through a window.

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: I have seen most of the western orioles, but not the immatures. I'm very familiar with Northern (Baltimore) Oriole

15. Other observers: My wife, Cecille

16. Did the others agree with your identification? She agrees with the field marks.

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: None.

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description: Looked at every field guide I own. Bird most closely resembles the immature male "Bullock's" pictured in Audubon Master Guide. Only problem is it had much more black on the throat (& head?) giving a "hooded" appearance.

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? 2 days.

Dennis Thompson Address: 7503 Wildflower Ct.

Signature Date: 12/22/92 City, State: Johnston, Ia.

(over)

(approx. 3:00)

While working in the basement on 12/19, I looked out the sliding glass door and saw a larger, black + yellow bird working its way out of the ravine toward the feeders. Thinking it was an Evening Grosbeak, I hollered at Cecille to look out the kitchen window. The bird landed on a suet feeder about 25 feet away, + I immediately realized it was an oriole. It stayed on the feeder for less than a minute, then flew back to the ravine, then across the street out of sight. It had its back to me most of the time. The streaked, dusky back was obvious. The breast was very yellow, but I don't know how far the yellow extended on the underparts. I didn't notice any details on the rump or tail. There was definitely black on the chest + throat. Consulting the field guides, the description + picture of the immature male "Bullock's" oriole seemed to match what I had seen. I notified Armstrong + others that night what I had seen. Based on the bird's brief appearance + the fact it flew rapidly out of sight, I wasn't very hopeful of seeing it again. On 12/20, I participated in the nearby Saylorsville Christmas Count. I returned home at 2:30, waiting for compilation at 5:00. Sitting on the couch reading the paper, I looked up and the oriole was sitting on a finch feeder attached to window less than 20 feet away! He sat there for a few seconds, then again flew across the street out of sight. This time I again noticed the very yellow underparts, but the black on the throat was much more extensive than what I had noted the day before. It almost had a hooded effect. It definitely extended up the sides of the face. Now I'm not sure what the bird is. All the possibilities seem quite unlikely. I would lean toward a Bullock's/Baltimore intergrade. No one ever saw the bird again.

Addendum - 2/15 - A further note before I send this in: In late January, Eugene Armstrong got a call from a woman who said she saw a Scott's Oriole at her feeder. She had only a brief look, + was using Nat'l Geographic Society field guide as a reference. She lives on Lower Beaver Road near Pioneer warehouse, which is about a mile from where I live. She had never seen the bird before, + realized it was rare. She wanted to let someone know, + somehow got Eugene's name. Unfortunately, he didn't catch her name, but she promised to call him if she saw the bird again. He never heard back from her.



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Dennis Johnson

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Signature

Date: 12/22/92

City, State: Johnston, Ia.

(over)

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