

Notes based on Joe Morlan's Ornithology class lecture February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009.  
Joe Morlan is not responsible for these notes, any errors or omissions in them are mine.

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Kevin saw a **Western Tanager** at Potrero Hill. It is not a bird you expect to see here in the middle of the winter. One shows up about every other year on one of the Christmas counts. They show up sometimes in flowering eucalyptus. The further south you go the more likely you are to encounter a wintering Western Tanager. The Monterey peninsula gets them just about every year. Reasonably regular in tiny numbers in Santa Barbara, San Diego, Los Angeles in the winter.

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## **Black-vented Oriole**

Skipped over

## **Streak-backed Oriole**

### **OCCURRENCE**

A very common oriole in northwestern Mexico.

Occurs regularly in Arizona, mostly in the wintertime but has nested near Douglas in extreme southern Arizona.

Has occurred in CA. Some older historical records, mostly in midwinter.

Only one record in northern CA: Andrew Molera State Park in the Monterey area. There also is a record from Malheur in Oregon, and one from Wisconsin.

### **FIELD MARKS**

Bill straight, massive.

The colors in Sibley may be a little bit truer than in Nat Geo, even young females tend to be pretty brightly colored.

### **Adult Male**

Very deep red orange, streaks on the back.

Pretty much look the same in spring and winter.

Bib pinched in underneath the bill.

### **Female**

Duller than male but some of them pretty bright.

You want a good look at this bird to distinguish it from other species.

Hooded Oriole in CA not likely to be as deep orange in color.

Winter plumage Hooded Orioles have a scaly looking back which might be confused with the streaks on a Streak-backed Oriole.

## **Altamira Oriole**

Was formerly called "Lichtenstein's Oriole"

### **OCCURRENCE**

Mexican species.

Used to be rare in the lower Rio Grande Valley, now common, hard to miss at places like Benson State Park or Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge, but can also be found outside of those refuge areas.

Non-migratory, no records in the US outside southern Texas.

Does come to bird feeders.

Likes open, shrubby areas.

### **FIELD MARKS**

Largest oriole in the US.

Bill heavy and straight, probably the thickest bill of any oriole, gives it a mean look.

Males and females essentially alike, females slightly yellower.

In the migratory orioles like the Bullock's and the Baltimore, the males and females are strikingly different, but in the sedentary species, those that do not migrate, frequently the males and females look alike and they are bright.

### **Adult**

Bright chrome yellow with a Hooded Oriole-like pattern.

Coloration generally brighter than most Hooded Orioles.

Bib maybe a little bit more pinched in, more like Streak-backed Oriole.

Back totally black, like a summer Hooded Oriole, not like a Streak-backed Oriole.

Orange in the lesser and median coverts (may have a few white tips).

Some white in the tertials but not a big white patch.

White at the bases of the primaries.

### **Immature**

Duller, more yellow in color.

Back and tail greenish yellow.

## **Audubon's Oriole**

Uncommon in south Texas.

Comes in to the DeWind's feeders in Salineño, between Falcon Dam and Bentsen.

A rather shy bird.

Another one in which the sexes look the same.

## **Spot-breasted Oriole**

### **OCCURRENCE**

Central American species that was introduced into southern Florida. It was expanding its range for a while, appeared to be self sustaining, has declined dramatically in recent decades.

This large, obvious orange and black bird can sit in a green leaved tree and be totally invisible.

No range overlap whatsoever with the similar Altamira Oriole, easiest to tell apart by range.

**FIELD MARKS**

Looks somewhat like an Altamira Oriole in that it has orange on the median coverts.  
More white on the tertials than Altamira.  
Black spots on the breast under the black bib. (Altamira Oriole does not have that.)  
Bill finer, still pretty straight, but not the humongous monster of the Altamira Oriole.

**Scott's Oriole****OCCURRENCE**

A bird of the southwestern deserts.  
Primarily occurs on hillsides with Joshua trees or other yuccas. If oak trees are penetrating into the area that is the optimal habitat.  
Breeds in southern CA in a lot of the desert regions, eastern Mojave, parts of Inyo County, Riverside County. Down in Imperial County it gets to be much harder to find.  
Does winter very locally at the coast of southern CA. One of the rarer species to be found in the winter in CA. In places like Santa Barbara or San Diego you'll often be able to find one.  
In northern CA it is essentially accidental. Most of the records appear to be early spring overshoots seen in April. Many of them are from the Central Valley or the interior rather than along the coast or from areas where vagrants tend to concentrate. One good record from Drakes Beach Visitor Center, Pt Reyes. A couple of records in SF.

**FIELD MARKS**

Migratory species in which the males and females look strikingly different.  
Very straight, rather thin bill.

**Adult Male**

Yellow and black, never gets orange.  
Pattern somewhat like that of a Baltimore Oriole: black hood, black back, but the orange coloration is replaced by yellow. Median coverts yellow.  
Central tail feathers black, outer tail feathers, which fold underneath, yellow basally and black distally, thus from the underside the base of the tail looks yellow and the tip black. (On Audubon's Oriole whole tail black from underneath.) Upper side of the tail looks all black (you see the central tail feathers).  
Bib seems to be reaching deeper down onto the breast than on Audubon's Oriole.

**Female**

The drabest of all of the North American orioles.  
Frequently little or no color other than dull yellowish brown, with more brown than yellow. Much less color and overall brownish compared to any other female orioles.  
Brownish head.  
Mottled dusky appearance to the back, much more so than any other species. The back feathers have dark interior spots and pale fringes.  
Rather bold white wing bars, dark between them.  
Some yellow on the rump and just on the outer tail feathers, tail otherwise brownish.  
Sibley mentions pale or white corners to the tail, not visible in the class slides.

**VOCALIZATIONS**

Song a little bit like a Meadowlark, clear, slurred whistles

## **Black-backed Oriole**

Not in either of our books because there are no accepted records.

Joe has a page about the one in southern CA on his web site. It was rejected because of questionable natural occurrence.

<http://fog.ccsf.edu/~jmorlan/bbor.htm>

### **OCCURRENCE**

Mexican species.

Showed up in San Diego right on the Mexican border, there was some assumption that the bird was an escape from captivity. Showed up in the spring with migratory Bullock's Orioles, so it seemed to have migratory movement, but then it was still there during the winter. Stuck around for about two years in the same trees.

### **FIELD MARKS**

Wing pattern like Bullock's Oriole.

Whole face and entire back black.

Tail black with yellow bases to the outer tail feathers. (Looks black from above, yellow with black tip from below.)

Immatures are indistinguishable from Bullock's, so other records might be overlooked.