

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*

Originating in eastern North America, the Baltimore Oriole is a rare migrant and winter visitor in California. Around the turn of the millennium, reports from San Diego County were averaging one to two per fall and one every other winter. Records of spring migrants may number as few as eight total. Wintering of the Baltimore Oriole in southern California, like that of some other orioles and tanagers, is linked to ornamental flowering trees, especially eucalyptus.

Migration: The Baltimore Oriole is most frequent in San Diego County in fall, mainly from late September through October. The earliest date is 9 September (1991, Point Loma, S7, R. E. Webster, AB 45:323, 1991). Nine in 1974 is still the record total for one fall. Wintering birds have stayed as late as 24 April (1968, Point Loma, AFN 22:577, 1968), so seven Baltimore Orioles discovered from late March to April may have been wintering rather than spring migrants. The eight records later in the spring



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

range from 11 May (1986, Point Loma, J. Oldenettel, AB 40:256, 1978; 1994, Torrey Pines State Reserve, N7, M. B. Stowe, NASFN 48:342, 1994) to 27 May (1967, Point Loma, AFN 21:542, 1967). Only one of the latter was during the atlas period (18 May 2001, Point Loma, J. C. Worley, NAB 55:358, 2001). All records are from the coastal lowland.

Winter: San Diego County's winter records of the Baltimore Oriole are scattered from near Fallbrook (D7; 30 January 1995, I. S. Quon, NASFN 49:200, 1995) to Coronado (S9/T9; three records), but many are from Balboa Park (R9). Flowering eucalyptus trees there were largely responsible for the winter maximum, seven on the San Diego Christmas bird count 18 December 1982. The atlas period had three wintering Baltimore Orioles,

at Coronado (T9) 19 December 1998, at Balboa Park 15 December 2001 (R. E. Webster), and at Greenwood Cemetery (S10) 16 December 2001 (G. McCaskie).

Taxonomy: The Baltimore and Bullock's Orioles hybridize regularly in a narrow zone in the Great Plains. One hybrid has been seen in San Diego County, at Point Loma 26–28 April 2000 (M. Lubin, P. A. Ginsburg).