

# Summer Tanager visits jelly feeder in DuPage County

by Melinda Born Chapman

On 2007 May 24, while gardening my Woodridge yard in DuPage County, I was serenaded by the melodious song of a Summer Tanager throughout the day. Occasionally I would catch glimpses of the bird, which appeared to be a first-year male, foraging among branches on our white oaks. I hoped he was feasting on the ample crop of 17-year cicadas we were hosting. Knowing the bird was mainly an insectivore, but unsure of the tanager's specific diet, I consulted Kaufman's Lives of North American Birds, and sure enough, cicadas were on the menu! Beetles, caterpillars, grasshoppers, and the Summer Tanager's favorites – bees and wasps – completed the insect foods. Also, small fruits and berries could be taken on occasion.

The next morning, as I had done for most of the month, I set out orange slices and a shallow dish of grape jelly on our platform feeder, hoping to attract Baltimore Orioles. We've had orioles visit the yard

*Summer Tanager visits  
jelly feeder in Woodridge yard,  
DuPage County late May 2007.*

*Photo by Jeff Chapman*

every spring, although never have they visited the oranges or jelly. However, hope springs eternal, so I continued feeding. Imagine my surprise when I observed what appeared to be a very large House Finch at the grape jelly. Anyway, that was the first thought that crossed my mind, since I certainly wasn't expecting the Summer Tanager on the feeder. But, indeed, the young male was feasting on grape jelly.

For the next three days, the Summer Tanager was on the platform enjoying the grape jelly. Generally, he would visit every half hour or so. During this time, the weather was warm and clear. The last visit was on the evening of 27 May. The next morning, we were disappointed that he was gone. I wished him a safe journey and

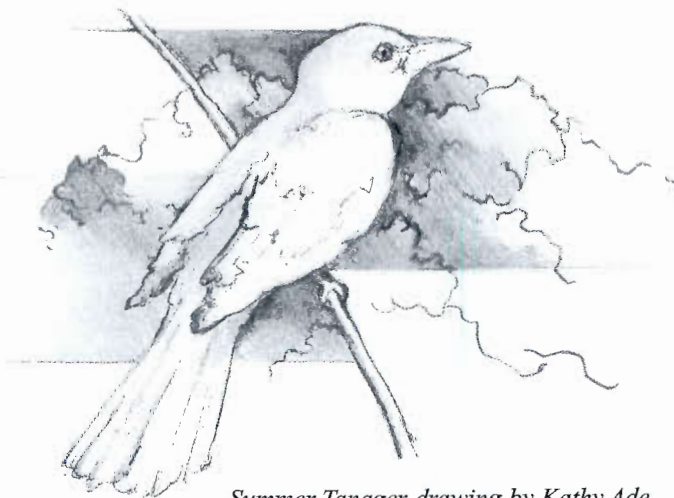


hoped the jelly provided energy to help him on his way.

Curious as to whether this feeding was a rare occurrence, I searched the Web for references of tanagers at jelly feeders. I found several incidents: Summer Tanagers in Wisconsin 20–22 May 2005 (birdforum.net) and in Maine 26 May 2005 (BirdEast Hotline). Scarlet Tanagers were at jelly feeders in Minnesota on 26 May 2004 (moumn.org) and 12 May 2007 (NewsHopper Publications) and in Wisconsin on 28 May 2004 (BirdChat). On a more exotic note, a Western Tanager visited a jelly feeder in Grand Rapids, Minnesota on 12 May 2006, as reported by Bonnie DeLare of the MN DNR. So it does appear that tanagers in general will take jelly from feeders, at least during spring migration.

This spring, I'm going to put out several dishes of grape jelly!

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*Summer Tanager drawing by Kathy Ade.*