

we had searched through our bird guides, our friend's bird guides, and even sneaked a peek at bird guides in the bookstore. We just could not locate any bird east of the Mississippi River that had all the correct characteristics. He was consuming all of our time.

We were impressed with his table manners. He would "study" the contents of the suet before he pecked something. He did not gobble greedily like the starlings, or hammer rapidly like the woodpeckers. He was not aggressive towards the other birds. He would not get on the suet if another bird were on it. He would not fly away if another bird landed on the opposite side of the suet. He had no fear of the cars going by on the street. He usually continued eating even when the other birds were frightened away.

I knew I needed to get pictures, so I place my little Minolta Freedom Zoom 70C camera on the sill of the picture window in the dining room. Each time the bird came and I heard, "Honey, the bird's back," I would literally crawl over to the window, slowly lift the camera, and try to zoom him in for a close picture. On 25 January, I took the last picture on the film and, high gas prices or not, we made a special 15-mile trip to Kewanee's Wal-mart and had our pictures in one hour. Talk about disappointment! We only had three clear pictures, none close enough to identify the bird accurately.

On 26 January, I began making long distance telephone calls trying to locate someone who could identify our mystery bird. Finally, after the third long distance call to the IDNR offices, I talked with Vernon Kleen, avian ecologist for the state. I explained who I was, where I was located, and what I wanted to know. I read a physical description of the bird from my first-day notes, and as I spoke, it was on the suet feeder. Kleen suggested locate Baltimore Oriole in my bird guide. He said an immature male would show yellow with an orange

tinge or orange splotches. I told him there was positively no orange on the bird, but who was I to dispute the expert? Kleen asked that I try to get some more pictures. I knew I had to get or borrow better camera equipment that would take a clear, close photo of our bird.

Soon I called a friend who had done some professional photography. His camera was broken, but he suggested we get a video camera so that we could zoom the subject in. Who had a camcorder?

On the evening of 27 January, we went to eat with our close friends, Harvey and Garna Dailey. I asked if they knew of someone who had a video camera. The next day we got the camcorder set up on a tripod directly in front of the big picture window. I proceeded to practice focusing on a Downy Woodpecker so that I would be prepared when our mystery friend came to feed. When the bird came, I turned on the video. After just a few minutes, the battery ran down and would not tape. I called our friend to get the other battery but it would not take a charge. All the while the bird was coming and staying longer, but not getting his picture taken. My next-door neighbor, Luann Bent, came over and was curious about the video camera. When I told her I was trying to get close-up pictures of a bird that was feeding here, she offered to loan us her camera. I was able to get excellent pictures with her Minolta Masum 300E. It was equipped with an AF70-210 telephoto lens. I used Kodak 400 Max 35mm film. The photos were taken and developed on 29 January. The video camera was now up and ready to roll.

On 31 January it was bright and sunny. The bird fed for almost four hours. He did leave for a while, as did all the other birds, when an American Kestrel landed in the tuliptree. We were able to get very good video pictures because of the sunny conditions and brightness from the snow still covering the ground.

We had our friends, the Daileys,

and our daughter, Jody Booth, on this day. We had the chairs lined up in the dining room just like the movie theaters. I even served popcorn.

The mystery bird's farewell visit was on 3 February 2000. At approximately 8:30 a.m. he peeked over the edge of the porch roof gutter; then, hung on the gutter to peek around. He did not fly to the suet cake to eat.

Shortly thereafter we mailed the oriole photos to Vernon Kleen, and the Illinois Ornithological Records Committee on 13 Feb 2000 reviewed the photos and compared them against museum specimens at the Chicago Field Museum of Natural History. The committee members identified the bird as an immature male Scott's Oriole (*Icterus parisorum*), an Illinois first state record! Will Russell and Richard D. Palmer, both Arizona expert birders and residents where the bird occurred, concurred with the identification (in litt.) after reviewing several of the photographic images.

Distribution and origin

Why was our Scott's Oriole so many miles from his normal southwestern United States environment and habitat? The oriole is a regular summer resident in northwestern Mexico, west Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and is occasionally, if not rarely found, in California, Nevada and Colorado, and Wyoming. However, the bird apparently tends to be a vagrant. Unusual records have been reported for Ontario, Washington, Idaho, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, and Louisiana according to DeSante and Pyle (1986). The nearest recent vagrant record in the mid-West was from Wisconsin (Isenring and Frank 1996) in Adams County during the winter of 1995/1996—another most remarkable winter record—like ours! Why did this bird migrate the wrong way? Perhaps he got caught in a storm and was thrown off course. I personally think he had a Y2K bug in his computer.