

**LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE
RARE BIRD DOCUMENTATION**

Oscar Johnson
Louisiana State University
119 Foster Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
ojohns7@lsu.edu

Species: Bullock's Oriole, *Icterus bullockii*

Location: LSU Aquaculture Research Station, East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana

Date: 18 November 2017

Age and sex: Immature male, I think

Molt status: None apparent

Number of individuals: One

Other observers: Matt Brady, Robb Brumfield, Eamon Corbett, Neil Gilbert, Flor Hernandez, Anna Hiller, Dan Lane, and Marky Mutchler

Original observer: Oscar Johnson

Circumstances: We had just entered the Aquaculture ponds from Ben Hur Road and rolled down the window to thank the manager for letting us in when I heard the chatter of a "Northern"-type oriole that sounded like it was in the old Poplar grove across the street. Most of the rest of the group had already driven in to the ponds, so we called them back and proceeded to search for the bird. Matt, Marky, and I found the bird after some playback of the chatter call and concluded that it was probably a Bullock's. I think Marky might have been the first to suggest the identification. We followed the bird for the next fifteen minutes or so as it foraged in the crown of the Poplars and nearby Live Oaks. All present got good looks, and a few of us got a nice series of photos. We eventually continued on to the large pond, where we relocated what I'm quite certain was the same Bullock's Oriole feeding at eye level in poor light, but accompanied by a Baltimore Oriole. My photo #10 is of this latter encounter. Conditions were good, with light wind, clear skies, and temps in the lower 70s (I think). Our eBird checklist is here: <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S40579079>

Description: Obviously a Bullock's/Baltimore Oriole. A fairly dull individual, with a grayish underparts, washed yellow-orange on the throat and upper chest, and yellowish on the vent. The tail was a dull yellow-olive. The back and rump were gray, slightly browner towards the nape. I did not see the crown clearly, but it looked dark. The yellow-orange of the throat extended through the auriculars without getting noticeably darker (i.e. it was evenly yellow-orange). The supercilium was thin and about the same color as the auriculars, divided from them by a thin dusky trans-ocular line. The center of the throat was slightly paler, almost whitish, but with what appeared to be some darker feather bases giving the bird a hint of a dark throat stripe at certain angles. The bill was

pale grayish, fairly broad at the base, and sharply pointed. The wings were gray with thin white edgings to most of the coverts and flight feathers. The greater coverts had thin white tips, forming a wing bar. The median coverts had distinctly broader white tips, forming a broader white wing bar. Each of the median coverts had a little indentation of black in the white tips, forming a jagged edge to this upper wing bar. The bird gave a harsh chatter in response to playback (and once prior to playback when I first detected it), typical of Bullock's/Baltimore orioles. On at least one occasion, both Dan and I heard the introductory notes of a typical Bullock's Oriole song, but we never definitely saw this individual giving that song, so I'm reluctant to assign it to this bird. It is certainly intriguing, however. We were not able to get recordings of the bird.

Discussion: Although this bird is easily identified as Baltimore/Bullock's Oriole based on structure, overall color, and call, identifying one from the other is not so easy, especially in subadult plumages. We were very careful to note as many characters as possible in the field and obtain photos of this bird at all angles. In my opinion, the characters on this individual are quite typical of a young male Bullock's Oriole. Most importantly, the orange of the head is brightest on the auriculars rather than on the throat, and the face has a hint of the pattern of an adult male Bullock's (the pale supercilium, dark trans-ocular, and dark throat stripe). Although Baltimore can be as dull as this bird, the grayish-yellow belly and gray back are typical of a Bullock's in this plumage. The wing bar formed by the median coverts has the jagged edge typical of a Bullock's Oriole, but I'm not familiar with the variation shown in Baltimore in this character.









