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## Orchard Oriole *Icterus spurius*

The Orchard Oriole is a bird of open country dotted with numerous trees, and its loud melodious song interspersed with a harsh chatter call is distinctive. This species breeds from extreme southern Canada and the northern United States south through the Gulf states and northern Mexico and from Wyoming and Colorado east to the Atlantic Ocean (AOU 1983).

**Habitat.** In north Florida the Orchard Oriole inhabits pecan orchards, towns, and farms with tall trees, such as oak, elm, maple. Live oaks are favorite nest trees in Florida, although many other tree species are also used. The nest is usually securely fastened in a crotch near the end of a long branch, often entwined in Spanish moss. The deep, cup-shaped nest is constructed chiefly of grasses, which may be green when picked but soon turn a bright yellow color (H. Kale, pers. obs.). Usually 3 to 4 bluish-white eggs with brown, purple, and gray markings are incubated by the female for 12 to 15 days, and nestlings fledge in 11 to 14 days (Harrison 1978).

Like that of all orioles, the Orchard Oriole diet consists of insects and fruit.

**Seasonal Occurrence.** This trans-Gulf migrant is seen in migration during August through October and in April and May. Egg dates range from 29 April through 27 May (Stevenson and Anderson 1994).

**Status.** Most of the atlased blocks in north Florida recorded the species. Sprunt (1954) showed the southern edge of the Florida breeding range of the Orchard Oriole at Gainesville in north Florida. By 1978, Stevenson (1979b) reported them breeding farther south in Taylor, Levy, Citrus, and Marion counties. Breeding occurred in Flagler and Sumter counties in the early 1980s (Stevenson and Anderson 1994). The Atlas map shows that the Orchard Oriole has moved farther southward into Volusia, Brevard, Orange, Lake, and Pasco counties. This southward progression continues, and in 1992 singing males were found at Narcoosee, in northern Osceola County (Kale, pers. obs.). Because Atlas coverage ended in 1991, the Osceola County records do not appear on the atlas map.

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