



## Attracting Orioles by Don & Lillian Stokes

Most orioles do not winter in the United States, but return during the breeding season. There are eight species of orioles that breed in the US. The two most widespread species are the Baltimore Oriole and Orchard Oriole in the East and the Bullock's Oriole in the West. Orioles can be attracted to your backyard with food and nesting materials.



Orioles often eat fruit and can be attracted with orange halves placed on platform feeders, a deck railing or nailed to a tree. It is important to have the oranges available just as the orioles arrive, which is around mid-March to mid-April in the South and mid-April to mid-May in the Northern half of the country. Some orioles seem to be more attracted to oranges when they first return from their wintering areas, but switch to an insect diet soon after. Other orioles seem to eat oranges throughout their breeding season.

Orioles also may use special sugar water feeders because sugar water is similar to the flower nectar on which orioles naturally feed. Some oriole sugar water feeders are colored orange and have large perches to accommodate the birds. Orioles may also use hummingbird feeders. Fill the feeders with a solution of 1 part white sugar to 4, 5 or 6 parts water. Boil the solution for 1-2 minutes, then cool. Change the solution every two days in hot weather.

In addition to fruit and sugar water, orioles can be attracted to suet, grape jelly and mealworms. Offer the jelly in a small dish placed on a platform. Mealworms can be placed in a small container, but make sure it has straight sides that are high enough (about 1 1/2 to 2 inches) so that the live mealworms cannot climb out. Mealworms are found in pet stores and wild bird stores. Many orioles feed the mealworms to their nestlings, which require a good protein source.

Orioles weave nests of natural plant fibers and will also use lengths of string cut into 8-12 inch pieces. You can put the string in a wire suet basket, drape it over shrubs or lay it in the open where orioles will see it. Orioles nest in trees in suburban areas, parks, forest edges and along rivers.

