



Male orioles are more vibrantly colored with the females having more dull hues, though with every molt, the ladies get brighter and brighter. Where female orioles shine is the nest building. The nest they create hangs and droops down from the branches like a pouch.

(Photo by Ron Ketter)

(FROM PAGE 37)

and hanging below a slender tree branch.

The female builds the nest with the male sometimes helping by providing nesting material.

The female builds the nest in 3 stages. She first crafts an outer bowl using flexible plant, animal, or human-made fibers that provide the main support for the nest.

Springy fibers are used for the second stage by making an inner bowl to maintain the nest's shape. Finally, downy feathers are used to create the nest lining.

The female works with one fiber

at time, often clinging upside down from the main twig or branch to weave the fiber into the nest.

This painstaking work can take from seven to 15 days to complete.

A typical nest has four or five eggs.

Only the female incubates for around two weeks until the eggs hatch.

Both parents then feed the nestlings by bringing caterpillars and soft parts of other insects (from grasshoppers and dragonflies) to the nest.

The young fledge after 12 or 13 days. Parents continue to feed the fledglings for another two weeks, at

which time the young are on their own. By late summer, Baltimore Orioles begin migrating to parts south.

Currently, there are estimated to be 12 million Baltimore Orioles. They have been declining steadily at an average rate of about 1.5% per year over the last 50 years. Dutch elm disease devastated American Elm habitat, and with it the preferred nesting trees of Baltimore Orioles.

This spring, keep watch for an orange and black bird and listen for a lively tune. You might be fortunate to see our state bird, the Baltimore Oriole. ➡

(FROM PAGE 37)

orioles shine is the nest building. Choosing to nest up high, they are terrific weavers using whatever they can grab — grasses, stray string, horse hair, etc.

The nest they create hangs and droops down from the branches like a pouch. To help them out, leave some short pieces of yarn or twine, under 4 inches or so in length, outside for them to incorporate into their nests.

How can you attract and feed an oriole family in your own backyard? If you are already a bird enthusiast with a bright and colorful garden, you are in good shape.

Orioles are also tempted by bright colors and love any trumpet shaped flowers you may already have for the pollinators and hummingbirds.

Orioles also have more slender and pointed beaks that are great at nibbling on fruits, and they'll feed on apples, berries and even bananas that may be out.

The bulk of their diet is a large variety of insects including caterpillars.

If you'd really like to attract Orioles in particular, it's no different than bribing your children or husband, simply offer their favorite foods.

Orioles have a particular love for both oranges and dark grape jelly.

You can certainly invest in a feeder from a nature or garden shop.

Most oriole feeders are trimmed in orange, their favorite color.

Many also look like a little bird patio or gazebo, with a cover-



Bird enthusiasts may choose to invest in a feeder from a nature or garden shop. Many oriole feeders are trimmed in orange, their favorite color.

(Photo by Leslie Milby)

ing to protect the orange or jelly from rain and to help keep a bit of shade.

Some also offer space for a nectar as well as a spot to skewer an orange and fill with grape jelly, making it a bit easier to keep up with all your dinner guests.

If you are lucky enough to land both orioles and hummingbirds though, you may need to watch out for one group becoming territorial or blocking out the other.

Like with any bird feeder, keep nectar and fruits fresh and un-

spoiled. As the temperatures rise, your offerings will spoil quicker but that is also the time when the birds need the nectar the most.

Should you choose to offer jelly, make sure you select a natural variety with as little added ingredients as possible.

If you're eager to feed orioles before getting a feeder, drop a halved orange in a suet feeder or even just dangle one by a string.

A small pot of jelly can also be stuck amongst your bright flowers.

