

NORTHERN (BULLOCK'S) ORIOLE EATS HUMMINGBIRD

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On 1 August 1976 at 1245 on South Farallon Island, California, Steve Morrell and I observed an immature or adult female Northern (Bullock's) Oriole (*Icterus galbula*) eating a hummingbird (*Selasphorus* sp.). The oriole was perched on a dead branch near the top of an 8 m high Monterey Cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*). It held the hummingbird with one foot and tore off and swallowed pieces of muscle, about 2 cm long, from the hummingbird's back. After watching the oriole feeding for several minutes we left the area, and when I returned 15 minutes later the oriole was gone; I found no remains of the hummingbird. It is not known whether the oriole was a predator or a scavenger since we did not see how it obtained the hummingbird.

Although several animals are known to prey upon and/or eat hummingbirds, orioles very rarely have been reported doing either. Wright (Auk 79:112, 1962) observed an adult male Northern (Baltimore) Oriole (*Icterus galbula*) capture and kill a Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*). The oriole dropped the hummingbird when the observer approached too closely, so it was not known if the oriole intended to eat it. The only other instance of a passerine preying upon a hummingbird was reported by Gamboa (Auk 94:157, 1977) who observed a Wied's Crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus tyrannulus*) capture and kill a Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*). He did not see the flycatcher eat the hummingbird.

The oriole's use of the hummingbird as food on South Farallon Island may be the result of a limited food supply available for landbirds. The simple plant community on the island consists of 13 native and 23 introduced species (Coulter, Madroño 21:131-137, 1972), none of which are normally part of the Northern Oriole's diet. Bent (U. S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 211:274-276, 1958) states that the oriole's diet, which is obtained mostly by gleaning the foliage, consists of 21% vegetable matter, mainly fruit, and 79% animal matter, including Lepidoptera moths, pupae, and caterpillars. Orioles on the island most probably eat insects. Although little is known about the island's insects, several aerial species are present. During my nine day stay I frequently observed orioles hawking for insects. The oriole's use of aerial insects, and especially the hummingbird, as food is an example of opportunistic utilization of the available prey species.

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