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FIRST DOCUMENTED RECORD OF
HOODED ORIOLE (*Icterus cucullatus*) IN NEBRASKA

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During May 2013 a very cooperative Hooded Oriole (*Icterus cucullatus*) provided lots of excitement for Nebraska birders, becoming the first documented record for the species in Nebraska. The bird was first observed 25 May 2013 by Susie and Bill Daro at their residence in Garrison (Butler Co). The Daros have several oriole feeders, and Baltimore and Orchard Orioles are common visitors. On the morning of May 25 they noted an unusual oriole visiting their feeders and, after checking the *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, concluded it was a Hooded Oriole. They found this hard to believe because of the oriole's known range, so they contacted John Carlini in Lincoln, who recommended they photograph the bird. Susie did so the following morning and emailed the photo to John. After seeing the photograph, John Carlini and Shari Schwartz immediately drove to Garrison and saw the oriole. Because of the graciousness of Susie, Bill, and son Colin Daro, over 30 people including myself were able to visit their residence



Figure 1. Hooded Oriole at Daro residence, Garrison, Butler Co., 25 May 2013.
Photo by Susie Daro.

and see the oriole. The bird stayed for 5 days and was last seen late in the day on May 29. Many photos were taken, including the first photo documentation May 26 by Susie Daro (Figure 1) and the photo by Paul Roisen May 28 (Figure 2). Three photos have been published in previous editions of *The Nebraska Bird Review* (one in the color photo section March 2013, Volume 81, Number 1, p. 22 by Mark Brogie and two in the Spring Field Report June 2013, Volume 81, Number 2, p. 77 by Mark Brogie and p. 78 by Paul Dunbar). Photos can also be seen on the NOU website (<http://www.noubirds.org/Birds/Photos.aspx>).



Figure 2. Hooded Oriole at Daro residence, Garrison, Butler Co., 28 May 2013.
Photo by Paul Roisen.

The Hooded Oriole can be easily distinguished from oriole species known to occur in Nebraska. Baltimore Oriole has a black hood and orange tail patches, Bullock's Oriole has a black crown, black eyeline, orange tail patches and large

white wing patch, Orchard Oriole has a black hood with chestnut covering the rest of the body, and Scott's Oriole (only one accepted documentation in Nebraska) has a black hood, yellow body and tail patches. Given the oriole was a vagrant, three other orange-black oriole species were also considered and excluded. Streaked-back Oriole, which occasionally wanders from its home range (Jaramillo and Burke 1999), is a Central American species seen in southwestern United States. It has distinct dark streaks on an orange back. Altamira Oriole, considered a sedentary species (Jaramillo and Burke 1999), is another Central American species whose U.S. range is limited to southern Texas. It is most similar to Hooded Oriole, but can be distinguished by its larger size, heavier bill, less black in the face and orange shoulder patch. Spot-breasted Oriole, another sedentary Central American species introduced in southern Florida that would be an unlikely candidate, is larger and has spots on the breast and an orange shoulder patch.

Vagrancy is not uncommon in Hooded Orioles (Jaramillo and Burke 1999), with a number of records occurring outside their normal range. They are considered casual in Oregon, southwest Washington, and Louisiana (Pleasants and Albano 2001). There are also records for British Columbia (Wallis 1996), Ontario (Boardman 1992) Colorado (Semo 2008), Iowa (Akers 2007), Wisconsin (Domagalski 2005), and, most recently, Kansas (http://ksbirds.org/gallery/HOOR_DouglasCo_2014.htm). In addition, a male Hooded Oriole was reported but never confirmed near Columbus, Nebraska, 12 May 1965 (Silcock 2013).

Five distinct subspecies of Hooded Oriole are recognized, which can be divided into two groups based on geographic and morphological similarities (Semo 2008). The breeding range of the western group, called the *nelsoni* group (*I. c. nelsoni* and *I. c. trochiloides*), includes southern California extending north on the Pacific side nearly to Oregon and east to the southern tip of Nevada (barely reaching southwestern Utah), the southern half of Arizona and southwestern New Mexico. The western group extends south through the Baja Peninsula and the Pacific side of the mainland of Mexico. In winter, this group moves to the southern half of the Baja Peninsula and farther south along the Pacific side of the mainland of Mexico. The breeding range of the eastern group, called the *cucullatus* group (*I. c. cucullatus*, *I. c. sennetti*, and *I. c. igneus*), extends north into southern Texas reaching the Edwards Plateau and west through the Rio Grande Valley to Big Bend. As it extends south, the range narrows along the east coast of Mexico through the Yucatan Peninsula and the northern half of Belize. Eastern group orioles do not move farther south in winter, although more northerly orioles retreat into the southern part of the range during winter (Pleasants and Albano 2001).

Western (*nelsoni* group) and eastern (*cucullatus* group) Hooded Orioles have distinct characteristics (Jaramillo and Burke 1999) that may give clues to the origin of the Hooded Oriole seen in Garrison. Western Hooded Orioles have on average longer, narrower bills. Jaramillo and Burke (1999) reported mean male culmen lengths (mm) of 21.6 and 21.8 for the two western subspecies, *I. c. nelsoni* and *I. c. trochiloides*, respectively, and 19.5, 19.7 and 19.8 for the three eastern subspecies, *I. c. cucullatus*, *I. c. sennetti*, and *I. c. igneus*, respectively. There was

no overlap in measurements between *I. c. nelsoni* (the northern subspecies of the western group) and *I. c. cucullatus* (the northern subspecies of the eastern group), the most likely candidates for vagrancy to Nebraska. In addition, breeding males of the western Hooded Oriole group are more yellowish orange, whereas breeding males of the eastern group are bright orange. These traits can be seen when looking at photographs of breeding male Hooded Orioles from known locations. Based on photographic comparisons to orioles from known locations, the Garrison Hooded Oriole appears more similar to *I. c. cucullatus* found in Texas than to *I. c. nelsoni* found in the Southwest. Interestingly, based on similar comparisons, the first documented record for Colorado, seen in southwestern Colorado near Cortez during summer 2006, was thought to be *I. c. nelsoni* (Semo 2008). Given its pattern of vagrancy, it is likely that a Hooded Oriole will show up again in Nebraska and delight those who are fortunate enough to see it.

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