

## **Bird Recovery: from Beaverhill Lake to South America!**

By Sara Pearce Meijerink

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory has recently received the details of another bird recovery and it is a major find! On May 26, 2017, assistant biologist Sara Pearce Meijerink banded an adult male Baltimore Oriole, a bright orange and black songbird that was at least 3 years of age. We measured and weighed the oriole, and attached a lightweight aluminum band with a unique 9-digit number on its leg. After taking a photo of this beautiful bird, we released the oriole back into the wild with the hope that someday, it might be recaptured and then we could learn more about its travels. Luckily, that “someday” occurred on October 22, 2017 when this handsome bird was recovered in Sevillano, Colombia! That is over 5850 kilometers traveled! This marks the Beaverhill Bird Observatory’s farthest bird recovery ever and its first bird recovery from South America.

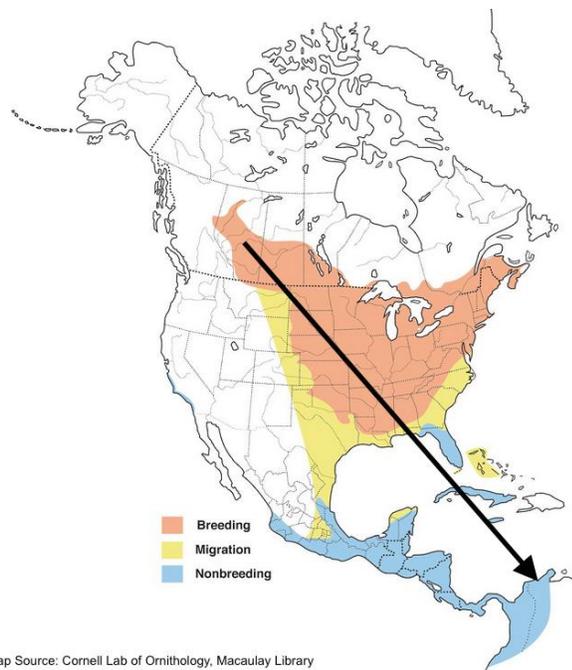
Baltimore Orioles are often heard but hard to see as they spend much of their time in tree canopies, foraging for insects, fruit and nectar. They can sometimes be spotted on lower branches if food is available and will often visit hummingbird feeders to drink the sugar-water. These birds prefer deciduous forests that are a bit open and will frequent parks, orchards, riversides, forest edges and even our backyards. Baltimore Orioles build hanging nests, which are constructed of woven fibers such as grasses, vines, wool and occasionally unnatural materials like twine, flagging tape and fishing line. These birds spend their breeding season in Canada and the United States then migrate south for the winter to Central America and the northern tip of South America, with a few remaining in the southern States.

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory’s Baltimore Oriole was recovered in a Sevillano, Colombia, just 10 km south of the Caribbean Sea, at the southern tip of this species winter range. This bird was likely taking advantage of the forested areas near the town as they often occupy trees in shade-grown coffee plantations and cacao plantations, sometimes utilizing locals’ gardens and woodlands. Previous recoveries of Baltimore Orioles in their wintering ranges come from Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras and El Salvador, but it is uncommon to get one from Colombia which makes this recovery all the more special.

Baltimore Oriole populations have been in decline here in Canada for the last 50+ years. According to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, their population has decreased by 24% since the 1960s. These birds are vulnerable to deforestation and habitat loss, which is occurring across their range in North, Central and South America. Insecticides, especially neonicotinoids, used by farmers are killing and poisoning their insect food supply away from the crop fields. They also migrate at night and become disoriented by lights left on in buildings and hit windows. What’s more, sometimes people try to help these birds by putting out cut oranges to feed on (which they love) and they are being attracted into people’s backyards, where pet cats hunt and kill them.

This particular Baltimore Oriole was unfortunately found dead after hitting a window. Window strikes are one of the most frequent causes of death for our feathered friends and it is estimated that here in Canada, between 16-42 million birds die each year from hitting windows.

Baltimore Orioles have been having a rough time, which is why it is so important for the Beaverhill Bird Observatory, as well as other bird observatories, to continue to study birds and learn more about their movements and habitat usage. With more understanding, we can better tackle the challenges these birds face and work towards conservation efforts to help protect Baltimore Orioles for future generations to enjoy. If you want to help, keep your cats indoors and put mesh or other objects on the outside of windows that kill birds.



Map Source: Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Macaulay Library

### **Addition Reading/ References**

[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Baltimore\\_Oriole/id](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Baltimore_Oriole/id)

[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Baltimore\\_Oriole/lifehistory](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Baltimore_Oriole/lifehistory)

<https://birdsna.org/Species-Account/bna/species/balori/introduction>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/migratory-bird-conservation/publications/strategy-region-5-pacific-rainforest/chapter-8.html>

<https://sora.unm.edu/sites/default/files/journals/nabb/v010n01/p0012-p0017.pdf>

<https://birdsna.org/Species-Account/bna/species/balori/introduction>