



About the Baltimore Oriole

The **Baltimore Oriole** is a brilliant burst of orange and black, named after the colors of Lord Baltimore's coat of arms. These stunning birds return to Minnesota and Wisconsin each spring after wintering in Central America and the Caribbean. Their return signals the arrival of warmer days and blooming flowers!

Baltimore Orioles are often spotted high in the trees or sipping nectar from backyard feeders. They have a rich, flute-like song and are known for their unique, woven hanging nests, like tiny bird hammocks swaying in the breeze. They're insect lovers too, making them helpful garden guests.

Let's celebrate this feathered friend with fun Early Bird activities!

Fun facts:

-  Only female orioles build the nests, and it can take her up to two weeks to complete it using plant fibers, string, hair, and even bits of yarn!
-  Baltimore Orioles are part of the blackbird family, and despite their flashy color, they can be surprisingly hard to spot as they flit quickly among the treetops. Young orioles don't start out bright orange; juveniles are more yellow and olive, gaining their vibrant colors as they grow.
-  **Get this:** orioles can sometimes mimic the sounds of other birds—talk about a musical talent!

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Orange You Glad It's Spring?

Create upcycled orange feeders to welcome orioles to your space!

Materials: Used orange peels (or orange-colored paper), string or twine, paperclips, optional spoonful of jelly (grape or orange pulp), scissors.

Instructions:

1. Cut a used orange in half and scoop out the inside (enjoy the fruit or compost it!).
2. Poke holes in the sides of the peel and tie a string through to create a hanging basket.
3. Place a small spoonful of jelly or bits of fruit pulp inside.
4. Hang it in a tree or outside a window—oriole-style!

Optional craft twist: No orange? Draw an oriole feeder on paper, decorate it, and share how you would design the ultimate oriole café!



Photo from naturalbeachliving.com

Beak Test Challenge

Not all beaks are built the same! Orioles use theirs to sip nectar and pick insects. How does that compare to other beaks?

Materials: Tweezers, tongs, spoon, chopsticks, clothespin, small container of items like rubber bands, beads, cereal, or cotton balls; optional paper to record results.

Instructions:

1. Set out 3–4 different tools to act as “beaks” (tweezers, spoon, clothespin, etc.).
2. Use each tool to pick up different items from your container. Try cereal for “fruit,” cotton balls for “nesting material,” etc.
3. Which tool works best for which item? Record your results.
4. Discuss how an oriole’s slender, pointed beak is perfectly designed for what it eats and how other birds might need different tools.

Fun tip: Add a small cup or “nest” and try to drop each item in without spilling, just like a bird feeding chicks or building a nest!

Bonus Challenge: Use your non-dominant hand for one round to mimic how hard it would be to do this with limited dexterity. OR try blindfolded (with supervision!) to simulate searching for food using sound and touch like some birds do.



Photo from leftbraincraftbrain.com

Upcycled Oriole Art

Make a vibrant bird using recycled materials—no two will be the same!

Materials: Scrap paper, cardboard, magazines, bottle caps, fabric bits, or anything recyclable; scissors; glue.

Instructions:

1. Look through your recycling or junk drawer for colorful scraps.
2. Use them to create a collage or sculpture of a Baltimore Oriole.
3. Focus on getting the colors and shape right, but feel free to get silly or abstract too!
4. Add a background to show the oriole's favorite environment: treetops, feeders, or blooming branches.

Oriole Obstacle Adventure Game

Fly, flap, perch, and build your way through an oriole's day!

Materials:

- Cones, pillows, boxes, tape, chairs—anything to make a simple obstacle course.
- Printed signs or index cards with action prompts (see below).
- *Optional:* orange and black paper for team bands or bird “costumes”.

Instructions:

1. Set up an obstacle course with 4–6 stations, each representing a different part of an oriole's day.
2. At each station, players must complete a fun challenge using bird-like movements:
 - Fly South: Flap your wings (arms) and zigzag through cones or chairs
 - Forage for Food: Hop like a bird and pick up small objects (cereal or pom-poms) with tongs or a spoon
 - Sing Your Song: Whistle or hum a bird call while spinning in a circle
 - Build a Nest: Stack soft items like socks or yarn balls into a “nest” at the next station
 - Avoid the Predator: Freeze like a statue for 10 seconds if a leader yells “Hawk!”
 - Perch & Rest: Balance on one foot for 5 seconds before flying to the next challenge
3. Let players go through in teams or time each player individually, and cheer each other on.

Bonus challenge: Add a “Migration Relay” where players flap from one side of the room to the other while carrying a “berry” (pom-pom or cotton ball) on a spoon—no hands allowed!

Oriole connection: This game highlights the real activities an oriole does every day, migrating, foraging, building nests, and avoiding danger, while keeping kids active and engaged.

Get Involved

How Can We Help the Baltimore Oriole?

Baltimore Orioles may fly thousands of miles each year, but when they return to Minnesota, they need **safe, healthy places to rest, eat, and raise their young**. The good news? You can help, even as a kid! Here's how:

1. Plant Native Trees and Shrubs

Orioles love tall trees for nesting and open spaces with scattered branches. If you can, help your family plant native trees like:

- American elm
- Cottonwood
- Boxelder
- Serviceberry (also produces yummy berries for birds!)

You don't need a forest; **even planting one bird-friendly bush** in a yard or community garden can help!

2. Leave Nature Messy (On Purpose!)

Birds use twigs, grass, and string to build nests. Instead of cleaning up everything in the yard or garden, leave:

- Small piles of sticks
- Long grasses
- Bits of natural yarn or twine (no plastic or synthetic fibers!)

This helps orioles and many other birds build cozy nests.

3. Say No to Pesticides

Pesticides can harm the insects orioles eat, or even poison birds directly. Ask your family to skip spraying the lawn and garden—**more bugs = more bird food!**

4. Spread the Word

Tell your friends, classmates, or neighbors what you've learned! Make a poster, draw a comic, or host a mini "Save the Orioles" day to teach others how to help.

Activities like this help to make a better home for our feathered friends like the Baltimore Oriole. When we protect nature, we protect it's magic and make the world a better place.



Take the next step on your **Girl Scout journey** by renewing your membership during **Early Bird!**

