

## Hooded Oriole *Icterus cucullatus*



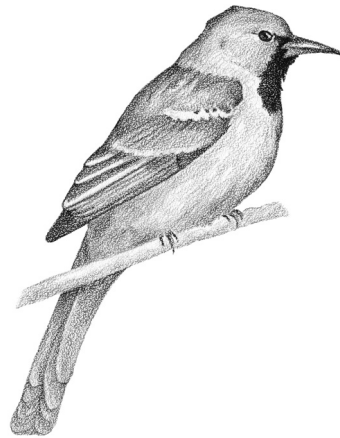
**Folk Name:** (none)  
**Status:** Vagrant  
**Abundance:** Accidental  
**Habitat:** Backyard feeders

On February 6, 2015, John Brammer photographed an unusual-looking oriole that was eating suet at his backyard bird feeder in southwest Charlotte. He wasn't sure what kind of oriole it was, so he posted a photo online and requested help in identifying the bird. After a quick review, a couple local birders tentatively identified it as an immature male Hooded Oriole. This bird was not only the first ever found in Mecklenburg County, it was the first ever to be seen in North or South Carolina. Hooded Orioles are native to the lower southwestern United States and are an extremely rare stray in the east.

Several local birders immediately went to see the bird on the following day; unfortunately, it never returned. Without today's ease and availability of digital photographic technology, many records such as this would not get formally documented. Is this an aberrant wandering vagrant individual or the first sighting of a species expanding its wintering range? Only time and good record keeping will tell.

The identification and formal documentation of the sighting of a rare bird is often a very complicated process. The North Carolina Bird Records Committee evaluated Brammer's series of photographs of the Hooded Oriole and provided this report:

In the initial round of voting, a majority of committee members felt the bird was a Hooded Oriole but the committee returned an "unresolved" verdict, thereby requiring input from outside reviewers. Two members felt that Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*) could not be ruled out. After receiving outside input comments from Mary



J F M A M J J A S O N D



*Hooded Oriole visiting backyard in 2015. (John Brammer)*

Gustafson and Eric Carpenter, the NCBRC voted unanimously to accept the report. This represents the first state record for the species and it is placed on the Definitive List by virtue of definitive photographs.