

## AN ORANGE SCARLET Tanager

By Constance Katholi

As I approached the net on May 12, 1967 I mentally registered "Baltimore Oriole" for such were the colors of the bird tangled upside-down in the mesh; as I parted the webbing, however, I experienced a thrill of excitement and disbelief, for the bird in my hand was a male Scarlet Tanager (Piranga olivacea)! There was no question about it, but instead of fire-glow scarlet, he wore Halloween colors - on his body a pure orange with no trace of red; and on wing coverts, tertials, and tail, a velvety black. Brown flight feathers retained from his post-juvenile molt marked him as sub-adult. His bill, pale bluish-green, had a narrow band of turquoise basally which lent an exotic touch. This was no case of incomplete pre-nuptial molt: the plumage was perfect, flawless and unflecked, without blotches or greenish patches as shown in the field guides for some individuals his age.

He was detained long enough for pictures to be taken. Although beautiful, these pictures fail to do justice to his coloring, which appears more golden - or goldfinch yellow - on film than in life. When released he flew off in a positive manner, convincing me that he was already established as a breeding bird on territory close by. (Alas, EBBA News cannot print photographs in color, or we would have published the excellent picture Mrs. Katholi sent us. -Ed.)

Scarlet Tanagers arrived in the area this year on April 15; the chances seem good that this bird was not still migrating on May 12. I hope this is so, for it would be extremely interesting to recapture this bird another spring after he had completed additional molts. My high percentage of returns of Summer Tanagers encourages me to entertain this possibility of recapture.

Research into Roberts subdued (somewhat) my excitement over this "rarity": on page 698, re Thraupidae, he says, "The second year males are usually paler red, or orange-red, with rusty brown flight feathers..." It is hard for me to believe that this particular bird will not retain this glorious unusual color for the rest of his life.

Two days previous, on May 10, I had netted a Summer Tanager which was also off-color. He appeared quite orange at a distance, and in the hand it could be seen that the normal rosy red of some parts, which shaded to orange with golden tints, was flecked and variegated. This bird would in time, I felt sure, assume a completely normal color, exemplifying the above-quoted text.

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