Olive-backed Oriole - *Oriolus sagittatus*

Olive-backed Oriole is a striking bird with green back and head with large red bill and red eye. Casino, NSW.

The underside of the Olive-backed Oriole is pale with broken dark stripes; quite different to the green upper side. Pottsville, NSW.

The male Olive-backed Oriole - *Oriolus sagittatus* - has a rich olive-green head, neck and upper back; chin is grey-green streaked with black and grading into white under parts streaked with black. The mid and lower back are green; wings folded over the lower back are grey with white edges. Tail is mid-grey with outer feathers narrowly or broadly tipped white. The large bill is variably salmon pink to red, also described as brick red. Eye is red, feet leaden grey. Females are slightly smaller, more clearly streaked on the back and more coarsely streaked below. Length 25 to 28 centimetres.
Immature Olive-backed Oriole with dark eye, bill mostly dark coloured but beginning to turn red. The buff eyebrow is fairly prominent; this will be lost in adult plumage. Feathers show red-brown edging which will also be lost in adult plumage. Pottsville, NSW

Immature birds are much paler green, have dusky brown bills, dark eyes, faint buff eyebrow, rufous edging on wing feathers, underside is dirty white heavily streaked black.

Lives in eucalyptus woodland and open forest, living and feeding in the upper foliage and branches, singly and in dispersed pairs. They are mainly fruit eaters but take insects, caterpillars, leaf beetles and ants. The green colour of the upper parts provides excellent camouflage while the bird forages among leaves but any concealment is offset by the loud and distinctive call the bird makes. One common call is two short calls followed by a longer one; this has been described as "orry-orry-orryiole".

Found along coastal and near inland strips in northern and eastern Australia from Broome, WA, to the south-east of South Australia; plus around Adelaide. Also found in southern New Guinea.
Birds in southern Queensland and south of Queensland move north to central and north eastern Queensland in autumn and return south in spring to breed.

There are two main races; one across northern Australia to Cape York Peninsula; the other from the foot of Cape York Peninsula down the east coast. Some schemes include a third race confined to Cape York Peninsula.

Established pairs sing regularly to one another through the year, apparently to maintain and re-inforce their bond. Breeding takes place from September to January. The nest is a deep cup-shaped one made of bark strips, leaves, grass, wool or other soft plant material built by the female in about 14 days suspended by the rim from a thin fork in outer foliage of tree or shrub.

Two to four eggs are laid, cream, spotted and blotched with grey and brown; oval, about 32 by 22 millimetres. The female incubates the eggs for 17 to 18 days; the male makes brief visits but does not take part. Both parents feed the young by regurgitation; they fledge in 15 to 17 days. In good seasons the male may take over care of the fledglings while the female raises a second brood. As soon as they become independent the young are dispersed.

Similar Species. The dark olive-green upper parts, red bill, red-eye and streaked underside make this bird easy to identify. It may be initially confused with the female figbird because of the underside broken stripes but bill and eye are different colours.