We observed an adult male Audubon's [Black-Headed] Oriole Icterus graduacauda at an approximate distance of 15 m for 10 mins. beginning 15:13 hr, 12 June 1995 in the tree line off Jobos Beach, near Ramey, Puerto Rico. The following day, we identified the bird from the literature with the aid of our field drawings and notes. The bright yellow body (particularly the yellow back), and black head, wings, and tail of this adult male were distinctive and diagnostic. By reviewing the literature, we recognized that this oriole was not a species normally occurring in Puerto Rico (Biaggi 1983, Pérez-Rivera 1993, Raffaele 1989, Rivera-Cianchini and Mojica-Sandoz 1981).

The normal range for Audubon's Oriole is southern Texas to southern Mexico (Clements 1992), approximately 2200 km from the site of our observation. R. L. Norton (pers. comm.) informed us that no other reports of this oriole are known outside of its normal range. Audubon's Orioles almost always occur in pairs. Our observation of a solitary bird could suggest an escaped cage bird, or that at least low numbers of these birds are in Puerto Rico. The great distance from its normal range and lack of any records from islands between Central America and Puerto Rico suggest that we saw a formerly captive bird that had been transported to Puerto Rico. However, this bird was seen away from any human population center in its natural habitat (woodland near water), which is unlike the normal behavior of isolated, caged and released birds. Studies of released caged birds in Puerto Rico have shown that such birds do not leave cities (H. A. Raffaele, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, pers. comm.), although many exotics have eventually become established in rural areas.

Audubon's Oriole is not a common cage bird in Puerto Rico, but some people have this species in captivity (R. A. Pérez-Rivera, pers. comm.). We have not been able to find records of recent sales of this animal, but no records would be expected because it can not be legally imported (Pérez-Rivera, pers. comm.). A range extension or wandering of this bird from Central America to Puerto Rico is unlikely, but is an alternate explanation.

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LITERATURE CITED