



“Musing from the Hill” by Susan Crossett

as seen on the *Dunkirk Observer* on Fridays
and the *Jamestown Post-Journal* on Saturdays



No Tigers Here

Published July 16, 2021

As a Bryn Mawr girl, I never particularly cottoned to Princeton boys.

Oh, sure, their campus was lovely. But so was ours – same Gothic architecture.

Chuck's and my relationship was brief (was his name even “Chuck?”), ending with a finality when I mailed him a dead goldfish. (I did NOT kill it. One of my roommates just happened to have one available.)

Orange and black. Halloween of course – well, let me button my lips on that. Princeton tiger, of course orange and black as well. And those tigers! Stuffed – the largest beautifully made by Steiff. One had to be a very select date to be given one of those. I got to see one of the largest in the arms of an upper classmate who shared my dorm. I stopped at the fish. Look – I was straight out of Warren High and we (well, most of us) didn't do those things (or even most likely, know).

I bear no ill will to them – or anyone. I simply presume that's one of the upsides of reaching my age in good spirits.

Orange and black – black and orange, perhaps – for me is the orioles that have rapidly learned to come to the table on the deck for their grape jelly treat. (Turns out they're also pleased to sample the hummingbird's nectar and the suet.)



A thoughtful daughter gave me the feeder for Mother's Day. Big petals of purple metal, it's supposed to be hung using all sorts of metal brackets and paraphernalia that came with it. Not particularly happy about finding a branch from which to hang it – much less having to fill it quite steadily for my birds are a hungry lot, I set it on the table.

Trouble being there were large screws on the bottom that made it exceptionally tippy. Setting it in a bowl solved that problem till somebody pushed the bowl off the table, breaking into two large pieces. (It was a good bowl.) Not my best idea for the bowl (useful

for cereal, ice cream, even creamed corn) will be missed – and I'll do better at being smarter.

The tiny insert for the feeder is red which perhaps is also the attraction to the orioles though at this stage I suspect neither sex is probably partial to red. I think they'll come to anything – probably my palm were I that patient – and that bereft of free time. (It – the time – will come, I keep telling myself.) The small bowl is also plastic which is a good thing because they tend to push it off the table when empty. I haven't decided yet if this is a notice or mere accident. I'm guessing they'll let me know before much more of the summer progresses. (It's still May as I write.)

I'll spare you the description of the oriole for no other bird in these environs even comes close to their coloration. Mom of course is a subdued palette but, again, there's nothing similar.

Honestly, you don't even have to see them for their devotional warble alerts your eyes that they've settled in the neighborhood. From earlier morning when I'm up (Such a treat to be awakened to that aria!) till the last rays of the sun, they happily sing, obviously having lots to carol about. I welcome the melody and, candidly, wish I had so much to sing about.



Life is good – awesome, in fact – but I expect even more of an upswing once this puppy-parvo issue is resolved and I can hold my own doggy baby in my arms. (I have been promised his nails will be cut before he reaches me. I'm still healing from Howie's toenails – all worth it at the time.)

For shame! For me too. I'm concentrating so much on the oriole's orange (which, let's face it, is unmistakable) I've quite overlooked the black, somehow presuming it will just fill in the spaces left. Which of course is what happens.

Would anyone describe this bird as black and orange? Why? There are so many black birds – partially colored (if accepting that black is a color) – that it's hard to think of any that don't have some black on their bodies. The jay (blue), yes, and I saw none on the beautiful wood thrush that crashed and failed to survive. But (scrolling quickly down just the top of my May list) we have the goose, chickadee, red-winged blackbird, downy and hairy, cardinal, the black spots on the mourning dove, even the towhee who popped in for a surprise visit for just one day.

Get thee hither, dear reader. It's porch sitting time.

Just keep your eyes and ears open. Orioles definitely don't need it to be attracted to the nectar.

Go – enjoy.

Written May 20, 2021

