

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Australasian coot: pp 143-144.



### AUSTRALASIAN COOT.

**Family** Rallidae

**Species** *Fulica atra*

**Common name** Coot

**Status** Native

**Abundance** Common in selected localities

**Size** 380 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Scaup 400 mm)

**Habitat** Clean-water lakes where it feeds among the rush and raupo verge, diving for food which is largely of vegetable matter.

**Worldwide range** A recent arrival in New Zealand from Australia with breeding populations establishing themselves in the 1960s in both the North and South

Islands. This species is widespread worldwide, from Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

**New Zealand range** In the North Island from North Auckland south, and on the eastern side of the South Island from Kaikoura to Oamaru.

### **Description**

**Upperparts** Black. **Underparts** Dull black tending to greyish. **Bill and frontal shield** White. **Legs and feet** Grey with lobes on toes.

### **Conspicuous features**

- White bill and frontal shield.
- Lobed toes if birds are out of the water.

### **Conspicuous characteristics**

- Flight is low and fast but seldom observed.
- Has a habit of bobbing its head while it is swimming.
- Regularly dives.
- Brings up food for young and feeds them on the water.
- Usually prefers still water and not river currents.

**Call** A “krark krark” sound is the usual call.

**Nest** A floating platform of rushes and twigs anchored to a rush bush. Up to 8 creamy eggs are laid.

### **Where to find – North Island**

**Auckland** – Birkenhead at the Chelsea Sugar Refinery Lake. P. 296.

**Auckland** – Western Springs Lake. P. 297.

**Hamilton** – Lake Rotoroa or Hamilton Lake. P. 311.

**Rotorua** – Many of the Rotorua Lakes have coot. P. 324.

**Lake Taupo** – Usually at Motuoapa on Highway 1. P. 316, 326.

**Hawkes Bay** – Lake Tutira 30 kms north of Napier on Highway 2. P. 329.

**Wanganui** – Virginia Lake was one of the first lakes colonised by coot. P. 336.

**Manawatu** – Palmerston North at The Centennial Lagoon. P. 336.

### **Where to find – South Island**

**North Canterbury** – St Annes Lagoon near Cheviot. P. 347.

**Canterbury** – Hagley Park and Travis Wetlands in Christchurch. P. 349, 350.

**South Canterbury** – Lake Alexandrina and Lake McGregor near Lake Tekapo. P. 354.

**Otago** – Lake Hayes and Lake Wakatipu. P. 358.

**Southland** – Lake Te Anau at its southern end. P. 369.

**Southland** – Redcliff Wetlands. P. 369.