Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union Printed: 10/18/94

Caribbean Coot
28 Apr 1992
Emmet Co., IA
*Harold W. White
IBL 62:76, 63:70

Record Number: 92-17
Classification: NA

DOCUMENTATION
Harold W. White, P. O. Box 496, Estherville, IA 51334 (6/30/93)
LETTER
Harold W. White to Tom [Kent], 3 July 1993
REFERENCES
Field Reports: IBL 62:76
Records Committee: IBL 63:70
VOTE: 1 A-D, 6 NA

NA, Caribbean Coot is no longer an accepted specie in North America but is classified as a Common Coot.

NA, This is certainly an interesting sighting. Like Kenn Kaufman in Birding (June 1992), however, I believe there is a wide range of shield variation in American Coots, and it is doubtful that Carribean Coots are found in inland North America.

NA, The current thinking (see "Am. Birds", Winter '88, and "Birding", Ap./June '85, Ap. '92) suggests that white-shielded Coots in the U.S. are merely variants of the American Coot, and that there is no evidence that these birds originated in the Caribbean. Reasonably good information has been offered to support this conclusion, and I am not prepared to challenge the experts. It would be interesting to see how other states are dealing wiht Caribbean Coot records.

A-D, A studied view from 15 yds with 8x power binoculars showed the yellow frontal shield. The frontal shield is diagnostic, and would be hard to confuse with anything else. I am sure this record is an unprecented sighting for the midwest, but it seems ot me that an escapee of this species would be equally rare.

NA, The observer is to be commended for finding the first "Caribbean" coot in Iowa. The published data suggest that we should have seen more if more of us had just looked at coots more carefully. D. Roberson and L. F. Babtista (1988, White-shielded Coots in North America: a critical evaluation, American Birds 42:1241-1246) present a convincing argument for the non-existence of Caribbean Coots in North America and the AOU appears ready to strike this species from our lists. The shields appear to occur in males due to testosterone. Our new Regional Editor (Ken Brock) wrote me (26 June 1992), "I find that virtually every coot flock with greater than 100 birds contains a 'Caribbean' type." So now we can forget about these old coots and give Harold a star for finding Iowa's first and last.

NA, At this point I would classify this as an aberrant American Coot. Especially since reading the analysis of Photo Quiz Z in Birding, Vol XXIV, Issue 3, pg. 180-181. I think this is a "Caribbean-Like" bird. This would be too far for a bird from the West Indies to wander and agree with Kenn Kaufmnan that this

is a variant of the American Coot.

NA, Birding (June 1992 -- pages 180 and 181) has some good discussion on "Carribean-like" Coots in its Photo Quiz. As Kenn Kaufman states "there is a widespread opinion that all birds of this type seen in North America are just variants of the American Coot." It would have been nice to see, though!

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from the desk of
HAROLD W. WHITE

3 JULY 1993

Tom,
Thanks for the information from records committee on my coat. Only one member notes the yellow frontal shield, others refer to "white-shielded" coats which mine was not.

/ hw

FITZGIBBONS BROTHERS
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
108 NORTH SEVENTH STREET
P.O. BOX 496
ESTHERVILLE, IA 51334-0496
(712) 362-7215

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LAW OFFICES OF
FITZGIBBONS BROTHERS

LEO E. FITZGIBBONS
FRANCIS FITZGIBBONS
HAROLD W. WHITE, P. C.
JOSEPH L. FITZGIBBONS
NED A. STOCKDALE
DAVID A. LESTER

P. O. BOX 496
108 NORTH SEVENTH STREET
ESTHERVILLE, IOWA
51334

E. I. # 42-0254976
TELEPHONE (712) 362-7215
FAX (712) 362-3526

April 28, 1992

Tom Kent
211 Richards St.
Iowa City, Iowa 52246

Dear Tom:

One of the burdens of spending an afternoon in the field is the chance of an "odd bird" and knowing that it is something that cannot be in northwest Iowa.

(APRIL 26)

Last Sunday afternoon Jim Dinsmore called and asked if I had heard of a possible Trumpeter Swan in southwest Emmet County. He gave me directions to the last location and I found it at the same place.

Sallie and I continued on to the lake access to Burr Oak Lake, located in section 21 of High Lake Township, Emmet County.
The access is a gravel road maintained by the Iowa DNR. I drove close to the south edge of the lake and remained in the car facing the lake.

I saw a large number of American Coots on the lake and decided to review them for a possible moorhen which Sallie has not seen. As I reviewed them I noted a much different face on a coot at the closest part of the lake to the car, about 15 yards or so away. Sallie and I observed this particular coot for five minutes with 8 power binoculars.

Unlike the expected American Coot, this coot had a large and circular raised forehead which was yellow. The yellow was restricted to the raised portion. The remainder of the beak was white with a black ring near the tip, the same as the American Coots. This coot lacked the reddish circular protrusion at the top base of the bill. This coot was otherwise undistinguisable from the American Coots.

I immediately reviewed the National Geographical Field Guide which I had with me. The bill and head configuration were exactly as illustrated for the Carribean Coot. The accompanying text states that it "resembles American Coot but

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forehead shield is broader and white, sometimes tinged with yellow." The text continues that "a few American Coots may show extensively white facial shields" and "identification requires extreme caution and may not always be possible" Also, the range is "causual in southern Florida, chiefly in Miami area."

I reported my observation to Jim Dinsmore Sunday afternoon when I called to report that the swan was at the location he identified.

Do you have any comments or observations on this citing? Is the absence of the reddish circular protrusion diagnostic? Is this a sighting that should be documented?

Yours truly,

Harold W. White

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P. O. BOX 496
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ESTHERVILLE, IOWA
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FRANCIS FITZGIBBONS
HAROLD W. WHITE, P. C.
JOSEPH L. FITZGIBBONS
NED A. STOCKDALE
DAVID A. LESTER

E. I. # 42-0254976

TELEPHONE (712) 362-7215
FAX (712) 362-3526

May 6, 1992

Mr. Tom Kent
211 Richards Street
Iowa City, Iowa 52246

Dear Tom:

I supplement my letter of April 28, 1992.

Last week I reviewed the April 1992 issue of Birding. I was especially interested in Photograph Z at page 128. The coot that Sallie and I saw did not have a circular, reddish protrusion at the upper part of the forehead as shown in Birding. Also, the yellow area on our bird was larger and more circular.

Yours truly,

Harold W. White