

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

Records Committee, Iowa Ornithologists' Union
Caribbean Coot

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is a variant of the American Coot.

NA, Birding (June 1992 -- pages 180 and 181) has some good discussion on "Caribbean-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!

92-17

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

1 pm

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92-17

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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 undistinguishable from the American Coots.

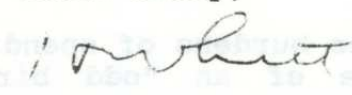
I immediately reviewed the National Geographical Field Guide which I had with me. The bill and head configuration were exactly as illustrated for the Caribbean Coot. The accompanying text states that it "resembles American Coot but

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 "causal 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

[Faint, mostly illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page]

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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