

**hypothetical, unsubstantiated**

The American Coot breeds throughout North America, south through C America and the W Indies, withdrawing from n. sections of its range during winter. It has been recorded as a vagrant to Greenland, Iceland, and Ireland (AOU 1998, Taylor 1998, Brisbin and Mowbray 2002), and on Clipperton Is, where it has bred in the past (Howell et al. 1993).

The occurrence and status of American Coot in the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands* has been confused by its similarity to the variable [Hawaiian Coot](#) (Pratt 1987). A single specimen record of American Coot from Hawai'i I (see below) needs to be confirmed, while many additional sight and photographic records (including up to 10-15% of the Kaua'i population in 1977 and 35 birds there in 1984; *AB* 31:376, Pratt 1987) are unsubstantiated and most likely pertain to first-year Hawaiian Coots. The primary character distinguishing American from Hawaiian Coot, a reduced frontal shield (Pratt 1978, 1987), also occurs in first-year coots of all species (Gullion 1951, Taylor 1998, Brisbin and Mowbray 2002, Pyle 2008), including Hawaiian Coots (BPBM specimens; see below). Furthermore, a small proportion of American Coots show enlarged white frontal shields as found in Hawaiian Coot (Payne and Master 1983, Roberson and Baptista 1988), indicating that individuals with anomalous shield types may occur sporadically throughout all coot populations (see also *E* 3:37). American Coots are rare as vagrants to offshore islands of California (e.g., Richardson et al. 2003) and have not been reported from the *Northwestern Hawaiian Islands* (see [Hawaiian Coot](#)). It thus seems unlikely that fluctuations in numbers of Hawaiian Coots can be explained by influxes of American Coots (*AB* 31:376, 33:317; *E* 40:15; USFWS 1985; see also Udvardy 1960, Pratt 1987, Engilis and Pratt 1993). American Coots undoubtedly get to the Hawaiian Islands from time to time, as suggested by the apparent genetic similarity of this and Hawaiian Coot. However, until a full molecular analysis is performed on the Hawaiian specimen and a thorough study has been undertaken on variation in shield size in first-year and adult Hawaiian Coots, we regard the occurrence of American Coot in the Hawaiian Islands as unsubstantiated.

Pratt (1987) documents the specimen identified as American Coot, which was collected near Ka'alualu, Hawai'i, 4 Nov 1919 (BPBM 4745; [HRBP](#) 5887-5888 of specimen). Other sight records from Hawai'i of coots with reduced frontal shields and identified as American Coots are from Hilo (4 on 31 Oct 1985, 4 on 4 Dec 1995, and 1 on 12 Jan - 5 Dec 2002), and Aimakapa Pond (4-5 in Sep-Oct 1985, 1 during winter 1986, 1 on 31 Oct 1996, and 1 on 31 Oct 1999). A coot specimen showing bill characteristics of American Coot was collected on Ni'ihau in the late 1800s and sent to Rothschild for identification, but Rothschild did not respond, perhaps indicating that he felt it was a [Hawaiian Coot](#) (*E* 3:37). At Hanalei, Kaua'i, photographs of a possible American Coot with a reduced frontal shield were published by Pratt (1987), and several other similar birds were present on Kaua'i during that winter and spring. Other potential American Coots have been reported from O'ahu at Waipi'o Peninsula 4 Feb 1979 (*E* 40:15), 2 at Kahuku in Jan 1982, and one at the Ki'i unit of JCNWR 26 Apr 1986 (BPBM 162170; [HRBP](#) 0502-0505); Moloka'i near Kamalo 14-16 Jan 1943 (*E* 3:37); and Maui at Kealia

Pond NWR 14 Apr 1987 and 2 Jan 1998. Several additional potential American Coots photographed during the 2010s were all later deemed to be Hawaiian Coots.

In 2015, the [HBRC](#) voted on adding American Coot to the Hawaiian Island Checklist, based on the two specimen records (above) and photographs of a bird from Kaua'i, but the proposal was not accepted due to concerns about variation in the bill features of both coot species. Most members felt that DNA evidence from the specimen would be needed for conclusive acceptance of American Coot in Hawaii.

### [Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

### [Literature cited](#)

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