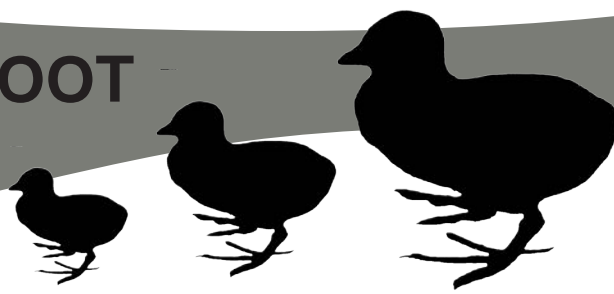


AUSTRALASIAN COOT

Fulica atra



The Australasian Coot was a rare species in New Zealand until the 1950's when they moved across the Tasman sea and began to breed here. They are now widespread especially around water margins fringed with raupo. The New Zealand Coot *Fulica chathamensis* is now unfortunately extinct.



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They will bite young that are begging for food and repeatedly do this until it stops begging or starves to death.

Description

The Coot is 32–42 cm long and has shiny black plumage. A characteristic of the adult is a bare patch on the forehead that looks like a white shield.

Food

The Coot is an omnivore, and will take a variety of food including algae, vegetation, seeds and fruit. It shows considerable variation in its feeding techniques, grazing on land or in the water. Diet is mainly vegetarian, which they obtain mostly by diving.

Breeding

Eggs are laid from August to February and build a floating nest of rushes and twigs, anchored to vegetation. They lay 4 - 8 creamy white eggs with reddish-brown speckles all over. They can lay up to 10 eggs, 2 or 3 times per season. However usually only a few survive as they are prey for birds such as herons and gulls.

They are sometimes called 'Bald Coot' because of the white bare patch on their forehead