

Another area where breeding occurred was on the large waste pumice flat over which Highway No. 1 now runs between Earthquake Gully and the top of the Hatepe Hill, especially on that part of the flat over which the road to the Hinemaiaia electric power station now passes. In the late 1920's this area was almost bare pumice, having scattered about it a few low plants of Monoao (*Dracophyllum subulatum*) and an occasional clump of tussock grass, all being associated with a covering of moss and lichens — typical 'hare country.' At least two pairs of Dotterels bred here every year. On 17/12/29 six birds were seen together. Breeding pairs were often seen in this area but by 1932 they were becoming fewer with the growth of the scrub which was covering the bare places; and by 1936 Dotterels had apparently deserted the district, none being found in spite of a careful search during the breeding season.

Other areas that the Banded Dotterels used to frequent were the swamps and shingle flats at Waitahanui and the shingle beaches and banks on the western side of Taupo Bay, but I have no evidence that they bred there.

In the spring of 1961, after a gap of several years, I heard from Mr. Nicholls, officer in charge of the recently established Native Plant Nursery that has taken over part of the Spa Farm on the north-eastern bank of the Waikato River, that a pair had nested and reared young on some newly ploughed ground in the plant-nursery, about three-quarters of a mile from the golf-course. On 4/11/61 I saw the hen bird in attendance on three well-feathered chicks. They were just able to fly over a low wire fence from the rough ploughed land into a grassed field where they quickly vanished, while the hen tried to lead us away up the strip of ploughed land.

As the scrub lands are ploughed and brought into cultivation, it is possible that the Banded Dotterel population around Taupo will increase again, though they will be scattered over a far wider area.

— J. S. ARMSTRONG



COOT ON THE VOLCANIC PLATEAU

On 25/9/62 I received a phone call from Mr. W. J. Brown, stating that a strange water-bird was present near his home at Lake Okareka. His description of the stranger left no doubt in my mind about its identity, a Coot of the Australian race (*Fulica atra australis*). On September 27th, C. D. Blomfield and I went to the lake to try to see the bird. To C.D.B. must go the credit of first spotting it, as it dived, splashed and cavorted close inshore. When it swam out into deeper water and in full view at thirty yards, we were able to confirm the identification. Every time it emerged from a dive its bill was full of vegetation, which it promptly swallowed, before diving again. Several times it uttered a guttural squawk, the intonation suggesting annoyance. We believe this is the first record of the Australian Coot for this region.

— M. J. S. BLACK