

AUSTRALIAN COOTS ON VIRGINIA LAKE,
WANGANUI (SEPTEMBER 1962 TO MAY 1966)

By ROSS MACDONALD

This lake is situated within the Wanganui City boundary in a park area. Vegetation around the margins consists of willows, raupo and other rushes. Grass paths allow visitors to walk right round the lake edge. The usual waterbird population is made up of Grey and Mallard ducks, Mute Swans, occasional Shoveler, Black, Little Black, and Little River Shags.

- 1962 One adult Coot present between 29th September, when first recorded by W. J. Pengelly, and 10th November.
- 1963 One adult bird present between 29th Sept. and 20th Oct.
- 1964 One bird present from 30th May; two from 13th June (though after this date, the two were not always seen). This pair bred, the two adults with 6 young being observed first on 12th Dec.
- 1965 A third adult was noted on the lake on 15th Jan. and remained for some time, being recorded up to 19th April. The 6 young, first seen on 12th Dec., were reared successfully. Two further chicks were raised by the same adult pair so that the Coot population in April was 3 adults and 8 young.
Between July and October no more than 8 birds were observed, though the possible total was 11.
On 26th Dec. 2 adults with 8 young were observed; 4 other adults were also on the lake. Thus only 6 of the 11 Coots had remained on the lake.
- 1966 During Jan., 3 breeding pairs were noted. The 8 young (noted on 26th Dec.) were recorded through Jan. until the 25th Jan., when only 7 were noted from that day. The other two breeding pairs raised two young each. The total population therefore at the end of Jan. stood at 6 adults (3 breeding pairs) and 11 young — 17 birds.
By the 27th April, the total population had been increased to 23 with two further broods of 4 and 2 young. The third breeding pair showed signs of having young but these could not be located. It would appear that the three breeding pairs raised 17 young during the 1965-66 breeding season.

SUMMARY

Year/ Breeding season	Adult birds	Breeding pairs	Young raised	Total after breeding season
1962	1			
1963	1			
1964-65	3	1	8	11
1965-66	6	3	17	23

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The breeding season on this lake has been from Dec. to April. Broods at the end of the season are smaller than earlier ones. The largest number hatched was 8, of which 7 were raised. A breeding pair usually has two clutches a season. Quite a considerable difference in size of young of the same brood has been noted. Each breeding pair have definite territories and the family group remains together some time after the young are feeding themselves. The larger chicks often shared waterweed with younger or smaller chicks.

Aggression is shown towards all other waterfowl.