

## COOTS AT LAKE OKAREKA

Lyall (Notornis X, 353) and Jackson and Lyall (Notornis XI, 82) have written accounts of the establishment of the Australian Coot (*Fulica atra*) on Lake Okareka up to the winter of 1964 when there were 21 birds on the lake. Since then numbers have risen to the present, apparently stable, level of about 70. Pairs have been reported to raise as many as three broods (not substantiated by banding) of up to 9 young. Occasional birds have been reported from other lakes in the Rotorua district but a second colony does not seem to have been established. Jackson and Lyall made a number of comments on the possible habitat preferences of these birds, but the following factors could also be of importance:

1. The area utilized by the coots on Lake Okareka has a depth of 3 to 10 feet and is very gently sloped so that any change in the lake level still leaves the birds with some water of this depth. Similar suitable looking areas on lakes Rotoehu and Rotoma all have a depth of over 7 feet. The coots on Lake Hayes feed in areas with a depth of about 4 feet (M. M. Small pers. comm.).
2. The aquatic plant composition of the area, *Nitella hookeri* and *Myriophyllum propinquum* with *Potamogeton ochreateus* occurring occasionally, and areas of *Elodea canadensis* nearer the shore, is to be found in other lakes although in different proportions. One area of Lake Rotoiti of approximately 4 feet in depth has only *Lagarosiphon major* growing in very solid beds.
3. Lake Okareka is a scenic reserve and therefore is not hunted during the game season.

— C. R. VEITCH



## FOOD PASSING BY BREEDING HARRIERS

For several years I have suspected that a pair of Harriers (*C. approximans*) has been nesting among the bracken and flax on the southern slopes of the Josephville hill, Southland. One day during December, 1966, I decided to watch the hillside while I ate my lunch. After a short time a Harrier appeared and took up station, perching on a low bush. Some fifteen minutes later a second Harrier arrived from the south, flying high and carrying something in its talons. The perching bird took flight and approached the incoming bird but at a much lower altitude. When they were within range of one another, the higher bird dropped the item of food which it was carrying, and which fell for a distance of at least 150 feet. The lower bird appeared to roll over in flight, extending its talons upwards to take the most perfect pass. After flying in a tight circle, it landed in the bracken where I later found the nest in which were two well-grown young Harriers.

This was a spectacular feat which I believe is seldom seen. I would be interested to know if such a long pass is usual.

— R. R. SUTTON