

AUSTRALIAN COOT IN MARINE ENVIRONMENT

At 1030 on 11 October 1980, I noticed an Australian Coot (*Fulica atra australis*) swimming in the sea near Karehana Bay, Plimmerton. The sea was calm with a light south-easterly wind, and the bird was swimming among rocks beside the road. After about 30 minutes, it moved to a crevice in a large rock at the sea edge, and it remained in this crevice, standing or sitting, for most of the day. At 1730 I thought it had gone, but after a few moments it came swimming out from behind some other rocks, and eventually stood on a seaweed-covered ledge with gentle waves washing over its feet. On the morning of 12 October, I could not find it.

The bird's plumage was immaculate and there was no sign of any injury. I observed it for long periods at fairly close range and it appeared unafraid; just content to sit and rest.

I cannot find any reference to Coots being seen in a salt-water environment in New Zealand, but Macdonald (1973, *Birds of Australia*) includes "brackish estuaries" as one of the bird's habitats in Australia. In Cramp *et al.* (1980, *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*, Vol. 2), the European subspecies is said to be "regular on reservoirs and even quiet inshore seawaters," and "Not marine, but will shift *in winter* to estuarine and other saline waters."

This also appears to be the first published record of the species in the immediate area of Greater Wellington.

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THE GADFLY PETREL SKULL AND DIVING PETRELS
FROM MACQUARIE ISLAND

In his most useful note on the smaller petrels of Macquarie Island, Jones (1980) mentions two issues requiring more discussion. In the first place he lists without comment the identification by Keith & Hines (1958) of a medium-sized gadfly petrel skull found in 1956 as the Mottled Petrel (*Pterodroma inexpectata*). In the past, I have had occasion to examine the skulls of most members of the genus *Pterodroma* and in point of fact have already questioned this identification (Bourne 1967). While the alternative which I suggested there, the Kerguelen Petrel (*P. brevirostris*), in fact normally has a larger orbit and narrower bill, there is still room for confusion, and it is much greater with the skull of the Soft-plumaged Petrel (*P. mollis*), which is virtually identical with that of the Mottled Petrel. I suspect that this identification was initially based on grounds of supposed geographical probability, which looks rather different now that the Soft-plumaged Petrel has been found at both Antipodes Island and Macquarie Island. I suggest that it may be advisable to refer old records of the occurrence of the Mottled Petrel at Macquarie and Antipodes Islands