

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

A SUFFOLK NESTING RECORD OF AMERICAN COOT.

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Five American Coot (*Fulica americana*), in juvenal plumage, with two adults were seen on a half-dozen visits to a restored marsh in Aquebogue, Suffolk, during the first two weeks of July 1998. Historically, there are few breeding records for this species on Long Island east of Jamaica Bay and it has generally been declining in the northeast as a nester.

This is only the second published record for Suffolk. The first was discovered by Christopher McKeever on Mecox Bay, Water Mill, in 1954 (Bull, 1964). McKeever also found a second nest on Water Mill Pond in the 1970s (fide Jim Ash) but this has remained unpublished until now.

The Aquebogue location is of interest as it is part of a functioning duck farm which has operated for many years on extensive fresh wetlands adjacent to Peconic Bay. With the assistance of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the property owner has recently restored some of the wetlands to a relatively natural state as a cattail marsh. As such, it forms part of the duck farm's pollution control system but it also provides good habitat for wetland species including, notably, Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*), which successfully reproduces on the farm in considerable numbers.

Coot, like several other essentially western water birds ("The breeding of the coot anywhere in the eastern United States is of rare or accidental occurrence...", Bent 1926), began nesting at certain favored eastern locations in the 1930s and, in numbers, in the 1950s. These included Jamaica Bay (up to 50 pairs; Bull 1964, 1974), the Hackensack Meadows (up to 300 pairs; Bull 1964), Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge (up to 200 nesting pairs; Bull 1974; Andrle and Carroll 1988), the Oak Orchard/ Iroquois/Tonawanda refuge complex ("in the hundreds", Eaton, S.W. in Andrle and Carroll 1988), and scattered other locations in western Long Island and western New York (Bull 1974). However it no longer nests at Jamaica Bay and no locations east of the Mississippi and north of Florida are mapped in *The Summer Atlas of North American Birds* (Price et al. 1995). According to *Bull's Birds of New York State* (DiCostanzo in Levine 1998), it is now a "rare to common, but local, breeder in the central and western portions (of the state)" and a rare breeder anywhere on the coast, having also declined or disappeared in New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Connecticut (Leck 1984; Veit and Petersen 1993; Zeranski and Baptist 1990).

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