

First mainland record of Caribbean Coot *Fulica caribaea* for Colombia

Primer registro continental de Fulica caribaea para Colombia

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Abstract

Details and photographs are presented of the first Colombian record of an apparent Caribbean Coot *Fulica caribaea* near Barranquilla.

Key words New record, Caribbean Coot, photograph, Colombia.

Resumen

Se presentan detalles y fotos del primer registro en Colombia de un individuo al parecer de *Fulica caribaea* cerca Barranquilla.

Palabras claves. Nuevo registro, fotografía, Colombia.

Caribbean Coot *Fulica caribaea* is a species currently known in Colombia only from sight records on San Andrés island (McNish 2003, Donegan et al. 2009), although there is a nearby population on the north coast of Venezuela (Taylor & Van Perlo 1998). On the 8th September 2013, I was leading a Wings/Sunbird tour with Brian Elce, Carol Goulden, Christopher Newbold, Marc Junio, Gil Ewing and Ann White. We visited private marshes east of Barranquilla at about 9 am this date.

While scanning through the large number of waterbirds present, I noticed a coot. Having never seen a coot in Colombia other than the American Coots *Fulica americana* in and near Bogotá and localized populations of the *colombianus* subspecies of Andean or Slate-colored Coot *Fulica ardesiaca* in the Andes, I realized it might be something interesting and proceeded to take a detailed description and some record photographs. I was aware that the most likely possibilities for a Coot at this location would be (a) a wandering American Coot from the Andean populations, (b) a vagrant American Coot from the nominate subspecies that occurs in North America or (c) a Caribbean Coot.

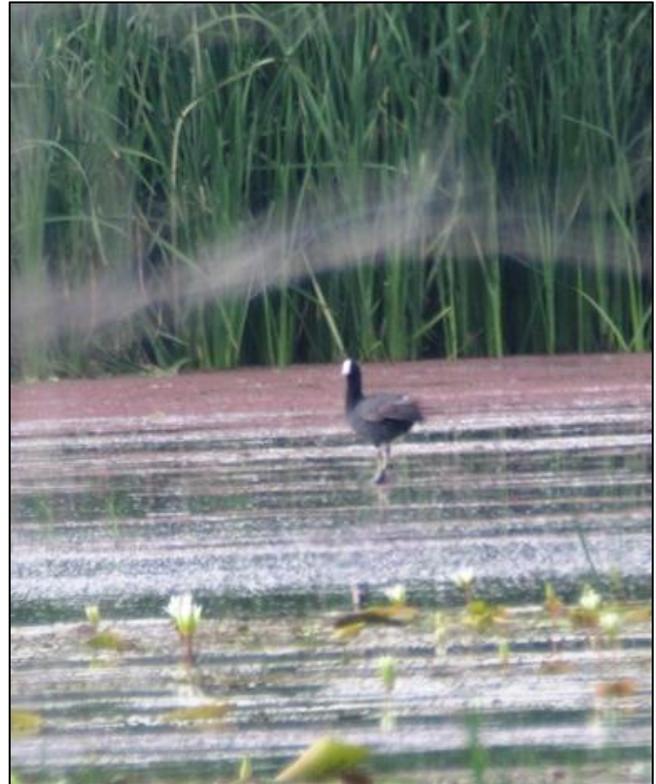




Figure 1a-c. Caribbean Coot *Fulica caribaea*, Barranquilla marshes, 8 September 2013. Above: original shot showing habitat; below two close-ups showing different aspects of crown detail.

I discussed the bird with Gil Ewing who indicated that Caribbean Coot was best separated from American Coot by the presence of an extensive white forehead shield and the lack of the red-knobs that are found at the top of the shield of American. All of the group studied the bird through the scope and it showed the features associated with Caribbean Coot, as can be seen in Figures 1-2, with overall dark plumage, a large shield with no evident red knob above it and a dusky line on the bill. In the evening, I was able to check a number of reference works which showed that the features noted in the field and in my photographs fitted well with Caribbean Coot. It is not possible to rule out an

aberrant nominate American Coot based on any observation or photograph of Caribbean Coot, given that 1% of nominate American Coots show white shields similar to Caribbean (Clark 1985, Sibley 2011). However, a Caribbean Coot would seem the most likely identification given the locality and morphology of the individual we observed.

This represents the first confirmed record of Caribbean Coot for Colombia and the first for mainland Colombia. It is perhaps an unsurprising addition to the Colombian mainland list, considering the presence of resident populations in coastal Venezuela. It remains to be seen if Caribbean Coot is a vagrant to Colombia's coastal marshes or an overlooked resident. It is entirely possible that a small population exists in the vast and under watched marshes of the Ciénega Grande or in the Guajira peninsula.

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