

Hawaiian Coot

COMMON NAME: Hawaiian coot

HAWAIIAN NAME: 'Alae ke'oke'o

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Fulica alai*

LEGAL STATUS: Endangered (Federal and State). Vulnerable (IUCN Red List). MBTA protected.

APPEARANCE: The Hawaiian coot is a small waterbird with a black head, a solid grayish-black body, a white bill, a prominent white frontal shield and white undertail feathers that are easily seen when the bird is swimming or displaying. Feet are lobed (not webbed) and are greenish-gray.

NATIVE RANGE: Endemic to Hawai'i, Hawaiian coots occur mainly in coastal plain wetlands below an elevation of 1350 feet. On the Island of Hawai'i Hawaiian coots use stock ponds at elevations up to 6600 feet and on Kaua'i they use ponds up to 4900 feet in elevation.

HABITAT: Hawaiian coots generally occur in lowland freshwater wetland habitats consisting of a mixture of emergent plant growth with open water. Occasionally they use brackish and saltwater habitats. They typically forage in shallow water (less than 12 inches), but will dive in water up to 48 inches deep.



DIET: Hawaiian coots generally feed close to nesting areas in somewhat open water. They are omnivorous, feeding on worms, snails, crustaceans, the adults and larvae of aquatic and terrestrial insects, small fish, and tadpoles. Coots also feed on the seeds and leaves of a variety of aquatic and terrestrial plants including sedges, grasses, and rushes. They will travel long distances, including between islands, to locate food sources.

ECOLOGICAL THREATS: Hawaiian coots are threatened by habitat loss, altered hydrology, non-native invasive plants, and introduced predators. Mongooses are especially harmful to ground nesting birds such as the Hawaiian coot. Other predators include dogs, feral cats, rats, and barn owls, which potentially prey on adults, young or eggs.

MCBH CONSERVATION MEASURES: Hawaiian coots occur in wetlands at MCBH Kaneohe Bay, primarily at the Percolation Ditch, the Klipper Golf Course Ponds, and fresh-water influenced portions of the Nu'upia Ponds Wildlife Management Area. They are also found at MCTAB. Conservation measures that benefit Hawaiian coots include:

- **Habitat protection and enhancement.** Although maintaining healthy non-invasive vegetation is important, Hawaiian coots on MCBH have adapted well to an urbanized environment.
- **Limiting disturbance.** Hawaiian coots appear unfazed by human activity, including normal light and noise pollution associated with the Base, and it does not appear to affect their breeding success. Established BMPs and conservation measures are employed when a project may disturb or otherwise modify a coot's behavior.



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- **Predator Control.** Hawaiian coots benefit from the on-going trapping of cats, mongoose, and rats within the Wildlife Management Area and wetlands.
- **Wildlife Friendly Lighting.** Although lighting on Base does not appear to be an issue, Natural Resources staff diligently work with Base and contract planners to incorporate International Dark-Sky lighting recommendations into all projects.
- **Monitoring to help direct management activities.** Natural Resources staff record occurrences and consult with USFWS as needed.
- **Education and outreach.** Development and distribution of informational material including videos, fact sheets, and briefings for military personnel and civilians on Base including new arrivals, and outreach with volunteers.



For more information: MCBH Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan, 2016. Sections 7.1, 7.2, Appendix C & D.

PHOTOS

1. Hawaiian Coot. David Schultz. <http://www.arkive.org/hawaiian-coot/fulica-alai/>
2. Hawaiian Coot family at enhanced Percolation Ditch wetland habitat, MCBH Kaneohe Bay. Dr. Diane Drigot.