

# Autumn and Winter Coots

## Title

Autumn and winter flocks and movements of Coot 1955-1958

## Description and Summary of Results

In the mid-1950s there was some interest in the numbers, movements and origins of the flocks of Coot *Fulica atra* which were being recorded all over Britain and Ireland. It was thought there were some movements in the winter but it was not known if these were north-south or east-west; it was unknown how much if any immigration occurred in the autumn from the European continent; or whether the apparent increase in numbers in some places resulted purely from adults and their young which had bred in Britain and Ireland concentrating onto fewer waters.

A survey was therefore started in autumn 1955 requesting all reports and counts of the species. Counts at least once per month were requested from the waters observed through the winter and spring of 1955/56. And the Wildfowl Trust agreed to add the species onto its National Wildfowl Count forms.

The response in England and Wales was good, but very poor in Scotland and Ireland, partly it seemed as many birds occurred on small lakes and ponds which were not counted for Wildfowl counts.

Preliminary results suggested there were no marked north-south movements. There seemed to be a gradual increase in numbers through the period in all of Britain but without a double peak of numbers suggestive of immigration. There was some evidence of wandering flocks in the south perhaps from continental Europe but no evidence of any immigration north of Essex. There were some east-west movements perhaps originating from the Baltic. An increase was noted in the Midlands and the Lake District but the reasons for the increase and the origin of these birds were unknown although thought to be a concentration of local birds.

Numbers in the west were much less in the second winter perhaps due to it being a mild winter?

The survey carried on into 1957/58 as well, but no information is extant.

## Methods of Data Capture

The original request was for all counts, preferably monthly, of Coots at any waters in the UK and Ireland through the autumn and winter and any information observers could gather on actual movements, and any changes in behaviour during the build-up period of flocks in the autumn and break-up period in the spring. National Wildfowl Counts also included Coot for the duration.

## Purpose of Data Capture

To determine the numbers, movements and origins of the apparent increase in numbers of Coot in autumn and winter.

**Geographic Coverage**

All of Britain and Ireland although very few counts were received from Scotland or Ireland.

**Temporal Coverage**

The autumn and winter of 1955/56, 1956/57 and 1957/58.

**Other Interested parties**

The Wildfowl Trust included the species in their National Wildfowl Counts.

**Organiser(s)**

S McClelland.

**Current Staff Contact**

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**Publications**

The survey was noted in all *Bird Study* issues from June 1955 (vol. 2) to September 1958 (vol. 5).

*Bird Study* 5: 149 (1958) notes that the organiser had left the country for three years after getting R G B Brown to become a joint author of the proposed report. However nothing more was heard of it. (The paper: Brown, R.G.B. 1955. The migration of the Coot in relation to Britain. *Bird Study* 2: 135-142 is almost exclusively about ringing recoveries.)

**Available from NBN?**

No.

**Computer data -- location**

None.

**Computer data -- outline contents**

N/A.

**Computer data -- description of contents**

N/A.

**Information held in BTO Archives**

Nothing found.

**Notes on Access and Use****Other information****Notes on Survey Design****Specific Issues for Analysis**