

- Loomis, L. M. 1890. Observations on some of the summer birds of the mountain portions of Pickens County, South Carolina. *Auk* 7:30-39, 124-130.
- Pickens, A. L. 1928. Birds of upper South Carolina: a study of geographical distribution. *Wilson Bull.* 40:182-191, 238-246.
- Simpson, M. B., Jr. 1969. Nesting of the Brown-headed Nuthatch in the southern Appalachians. *Chat* 33:103-104.
- Tanner, J. T. 1988. Range extension of the Brown-headed Nuthatch in western North Carolina. *Chat* 50:19.

American Coots Nest in South Carolina after a 35-year Interlude, and a Summary of South Carolina Coot Nidology

WILLIAM POST
Charleston Museum
360 Meeting Street
Charleston, SC 29403

On 17 June 1989 in the main freshwater impoundment at Magnolia Gardens, Charleston County, South Carolina, I found an American Coot (*Fulica americana*) nest containing three eggs. Both adults mobbed me from hidden positions in nearby Cattails (*Typha* spp.). On 20 June, the eggs were gone, although the nest was intact (see below), and adults were still in the vicinity. I assumed that the nest was depredated, as no young were seen or heard in the area.

On 6 July 1989, I found evidence of another nesting, when I saw a young American Coot (about seven days old) being fed by another pair of coots. The young, half-grown coot was last seen on 15 July, still accompanying the adults at the same spot where they were first seen.

On 30 July 1989, I saw four downy young (< 5 days old) in the vicinity of the nest site first found on 17 June. These young did not come from the first nest, as it had been collected (see below), but presumably were the results of a re-nesting by the original pair of coots.

In summary, in 1989 I found three nesting attempts at Magnolia Gardens, by at least two pairs of American Coots. During the breeding seasons of 1985-1988, the impoundment was searched weekly for nests of all species. No coot nests were found, and no coots were seen in the impoundment after June. The main difference in habitat conditions between 1985-1988 and 1989 was the higher water level maintained throughout the summer in the latter year (0.25 - 0.5 m higher than in preceding years).

As no descriptive information has been published for any of the American Coot nests that have been found in the state, I give the following details for the nest found on 17 June 1989. The nest was in a sparse (average distance between 10 clumps = 9 cm) island of cattails that measured 1.5 x 2.1 m, located near the center of a narrow (about 12 m wide) channel through dense stands of cattails. The distance from the island to the main cattails was 4 m on one side and 6 m on the

other. The water depth under the nest was 48 cm. The nest was a bulky floating platform made of cattail (*T. latifolia* and *T. domingensis*) leaves. The base of the nest, which touched the bottom of the pond, was 56 cm in diameter. The platform of the nest, which had a very shallow (<1 cm) depression, was about level with the water surface. Because of the buoyancy of the cattail leaves, the nest floated, although the bottommost leaves were in contact with the substrate below. When removed from the water, the nest had a depth of 23 cm. The sides of the nest were attached to four clumps of green cattail. The height of the tallest cattail above the nest was 2.3 m above the water. On 1 July, after I was sure that the nest would not be reused by the coots, the nest was collected. The dry weight of the nest (ChM No. 1984.44) was 579 g.

Table 1. American Coot nests found at Magnolia Gardens, 1960-1989.

Date	No. of nests: No. of eggs	Reference (ChM no. ¹)
1 May 1960	one: eight	Chat 24:75-76, 1960; (ChM 3213-3220)
3 May 1960	two: eight each	Chat 24:75-76, 1960
29 May 1960	one: nine	E. Cutts, unpubl. data, ChM
1 June 1963	one: seven	Cutts collection (ChM 3221-3227)
15 June 1963	one: seven	Cutts collection (ChM 3258-3264)
6 July 1963	one: eight	E. Cutts, unpubl. data, ChM
13 July 1963	one: seven	E. Cutts, unpubl. data, ChM
6 June 1964	two: six two: four one: five two: two	E. Cutts, unpubl. data, ChM
17 June 1989	one: three	present study

¹ ChM no. refers to accession numbers of specimens deposited in the Charleston Museum

American Coots are often present as summer vagrants in South Carolina, but in only a few cases have nests with eggs been found. The last published nesting of the American Coot in South Carolina was in 1961, from Williston, Barnwell County (Post, Chat 25:88, 1961). The species has also been found nesting in Charleston County, at Magnolia Gardens, in 1960 (Cutts, Chat 24: 75-76, 1960). An unverified report by Cutts that 40 pairs "nested" on Bull's Island, Charleston County, in 1964 was published in Burton (supplement to Contrib. Charleston Mus. 11, 1969). Unlike the others, the Bull's Island report was not substantiated by published details, photographs or specimens. As Cutts was a meticulous oologist, who recorded clutch sizes and other details of all nests that he found, not

just those whose contents he collected, it is doubtful that any direct evidence of nesting was obtained from Bull's Island.

In summary, American Coots are now known to have bred at only two localities in South Carolina, and the only extant site is Magnolia Gardens. Seventeen nests containing eggs have been found. The egg dates are 1 May (1960) - 20 July (1961). The mean peak egg date is 5 June. Assuming that the data in Table 1 (plus that for the single nest found in Barnwell County) represent a normal distribution, then the 95% confidence interval for egg dates is 27 May - 14 June.

Breeding of the Chestnut-sided Warbler at Caesar's Head, S. C.

IRVIN PITTS, JR.
8170 Geer Highway
Cleveland, SC 29635

In suitable habitat, the Chestnut-sided Warbler (*Dendroica pensylvanica*) is a common breeder in the mountains of North Carolina (above 600 m). In South Carolina, breeding records for this species have not been documented since the 1890s. Loomis (Auk 8:323-333, 1891) in his visit to Caesar's Head, stated that "this warbler is very common in this locality." He mentioned finding recently fledged young at Caesar's Head, but details of a nest are lacking. This article is a report on the present breeding status of the Chestnut-sided Warbler at Caesar's Head, Greenville County, S.C.

Territorial male Chestnut-sided Warblers were present in the Caesar's Head area in the summers of 1986 through 1989. I found the birds in areas associated with brushy powerline clearings. In 1986, one male was present near the Caesar's Head State Park headquarters (960 m). In 1987, a male was present in the same locality and I saw another singing near the Raven Cliff Falls Trail on 23 May (850 m). In 1988, a male was present near the State Park headquarters and another near Hwy. 276, 1.5 km from the North Carolina border.

On 30 April 1989, a territorial male was first seen in the powerline clearing near the State Park headquarters. On 14 May, I watched a female as she foraged in the undergrowth of the powerline clearing. The male chased her into a thicket and grasped her tail with his bill. They disappeared, and mating was not observed. On 8 June, I saw the male singing while holding caterpillars in his bill. He flew to a Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) thicket, which contained a nest with four young. Later that day, I photographed a female brooding the young.

I saw both adults bringing insects to the nest; these included caterpillars, moths and small grasshoppers. The young were fed at frequent intervals. The adults were tame and brought food while I stood nearby. When distressed, they reacted by moving through the shrubbery while giving an excited "chip" call. I did not see a distraction display. The young fledged on 13 June. On 15 June and 18 June, I saw both adults feeding the young in a nearby thicket.