

Rooks

Corvus frugiligus

Description

Colour: glossy purplish-black bird.

Size: large with the average bird being 45 cm in length and 400 g in weight.

Body: solid, stocky shape similar to a magpie but slightly larger.

Head: prominent powerful straight bill that develops white patches as the birds mature.

Diet: Strong preference for cereals and emerging crops. They also have a high proportion of invertebrates in their diet, primarily on fly larvae and beetles over the summer months, earthworms, and grass grubs when available.

Origin

Originating from Europe, particularly Great Britain and Ireland, though present in the majority of north and central Europe. Introduced into Canterbury and Hawkes Bay in the 1860s, main populations are currently based in Hawkes Bay and Wairarapa.

Where are rooks found?

Rooks can inhabit a variety of habitat and for the majority of the year they will move with available food sources. They are highly social birds which establish permanent breeding rookeries through September–October where they will restrict their movement to short distances from the rookery. They are very particular with their rookeries preferring relatively mature Radiata pine or eucalypt



shelterbelt or small stands with an elevated point.

What could I mistake a rook for?

Rooks can easily be mistaken for other birds, typically they are confused with Kaka (NZ native parrot), magpies, or even blackbirds. They are much larger than blackbirds, slightly larger than magpies and have no white colouring, and do not have the sickle beak or the strongly patterned brown/green/grey of a kaka.

How do rooks spread?

Rooks are highly mobile birds capable of covering large distances, feeding ranges can be as large as 20 kms. Rooks are extremely prone to disturbance particularly when being shot at therefore this is not recommended. Disturbance can fragment known populations and make effective control difficult. Mismanaged operations and ineffective methods have led to the displacement of birds and the establishment of new rookeries.

Why are rooks a problem?

In large numbers rooks become a significant agricultural pest feeding on crops, they damage a wide range of crops particularly at emergence when young plants are pulled from the ground to access the sprouting seed. Rooks also damage pasture while searching for grubs and other invertebrates exposing soil to erosion and encouraging weed growth, damage is similar to that caused by wild pigs.

Status as a pest animal in the Bay of Plenty

Eradication/Exclusion Pest Animal (refer to the Bay of Plenty Regional Council Regional Pest Management Plan).

Eradication will be led and funded by the Bay of Plenty Regional Council. It is an offence under sections 52 and 53 of the Biosecurity Act 1993 to sell, offer for sale, display, release, move or breed rooks in the Bay of Plenty region.

How do I get rid of rooks?

Contact the Bay of Plenty Regional Council for advice, or to confirm the identity of a bird.

For more information contact a Bay of Plenty Regional Council Land Management Officer.

