

ROOKS

Corvus frugilegis

Management programme

Exclusion	Eradication	Progressive containment	Sustained control	Site-led
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Impacts

Economic	Biodiversity	Soil resources	Water quantity/quality
Human health	Social and cultural wellbeing	Amenity/recreation	Animal welfare

Objectives

To reduce rooks within the Waikato region to zero density where rookeries are found, and to prevent adverse effects and impacts.

Why are they a pest?

Rooks feed on and damage newly sown crops, particularly cereals, peas, maize and squash. They often pull young plants from the ground to reach the seeds, however, they will eat cereal crops at any stage of growth. Rooks can also damage pasture by tearing it up when searching for grubs, exposing bare soil to erosion, and encouraging weed germination. Rooks in large numbers can devastate emerging crops, sometimes requiring them to be completely resown. In the past, farmers have also had a whole season's silage damaged by rooks tearing holes in the plastic wrapping.

Rooks can form large breeding colonies, called rookeries, of several hundred birds. In the Waikato they generally build their rookeries in pine or *Eucalyptus* trees. A typical rookery holds 3-7 nests, equating to 3-35 birds. Adults live in and about the rookery during the breeding season, from early September until mid-December. Outside of this time rooks can forage over 10s of square kilometres, with their distribution and behaviour strongly influenced by the availability of preferred foods.

Responsibility for control

Waikato Regional Council is responsible for controlling rooks.

- Occupiers in the Waikato are required to leave rooks and rookeries undisturbed unless they are instructed by, or under the supervision of, an authorised person (rule ROOK-3 of the *Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032*). This is because rooks are wary birds and will shift locations if pressured.
- Occupiers are encouraged to report rooks on their properties (rule ROOK-1 of the RPMP 2022-2032) and liaise with the council in areas where control programmes are in place.
- It is illegal to keep a live rook for any purpose (rule ROOK-2 of the RPMP 2022-2032), unless permitted by an authorised person.
- Waikato Regional Council monitors all rookeries to determine the range and density of rook populations and conducts all control operations to ensure its objectives are met.

What do they look like?

There are other introduced birds with black plumage in our region like magpies and blackbirds that could be confused with rooks. The following features and characteristics of each species will help you distinguish between them.

Rook



- Glossy black with a violet-blue tint, white face.
- 30-50cm long.
- Common call/s: 'Kaah'.
- Greyish skin flap on adult birds reaching from bill to nostrils.
- Dark grey bill.

Magpie



Sustained control pest – controlled by occupiers.

- Black or grey with white to grey hind neck and/or back.
- 35-45cm long.
- Common call/s: 'Quardle oodle arde wardle doodle.'
- White marking on wings and tail.
- Whitish bill with black tip.

Report rook sightings

Do not attempt to control rooks yourself unless you are permitted by an authorised person. Do not disturb their nests or approach the rooks as they will move elsewhere. Instead, report all rook sightings to the Waikato Regional Council by calling us (0800 800 401) or emailing rooksighting@waikatoregion.govt.nz.



Every spring, Waikato Regional Council asks landowners to report rook sightings for targeted pest control. It's a good time of the year to start seeing rooks as it's breeding season, which is when they congregate together. Once rookery sightings have been called in, a drone is used to survey for the presence of eggs and/or chicks in nests to ensure only active nests are treated. Rooks generally build nests in pine or eucalyptus trees. The largest colony ever found in New Zealand was nearly 1000 nests but, thanks to control, such groupings are a thing of the past.

Blackbird



Eurasian blackbird, male. Photo: Philip Griffin, nzbirdsonline.org.nz

Not considered a pest in the RPMP.

- Black (male).
- Up to 25cm long.
- Common call/s: Tuneful call. Harsh 'tchink' if disturbed.
- Smaller bird. Bright yellow bill (male).

More information

Advice

- For advice and additional information, call our pest animal staff on freephone 0800 800 401.

Web

- *Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032* – waikatoregion.govt.nz/RPMP
- *Waikato Biosecurity Strategy 2022-2032* – waikatoregion.govt.nz/biosecurity-strategy



Nest with eggs.