

Rook

Corvidae - Corvus frugilegus



What does it look like?

Rooks also referred to as a crow or raven, is a large black bird slightly larger than magpies. Adults are totally black except for their face, which has light-grey skin bare of feathers. Juvenile birds have a black-feathered face. Rooks have long, pointed black beaks and dark-brown eyes. They fly with steady but slow wing beats. Rooks call out with a raucous "caw caw" sound mostly heard while in flight and normally heard before being seen.

Rooks nest in colonies in tall trees, usually eucalyptus, pine or macrocarpa and they've been recorded in Norfolk pines and acacia species (brush wattle etc). The young are hatched from late September until early November and are able to fly within 28 days of hatching. Rooks can breed when 2 years old and will mate for life.

They usually travel up to 10km from their night-time roost to feeding sites, but in the breeding season they forage within a few kilometres of the rookery. The main foods of rooks are invertebrates, especially fly larvae, adult beetles and larvae (grass grub) during warmer months.

Why is it a problem?

Rooks are a potential threat to the district's cropping industry. Rooks are generally insect eaters but can also target crops as alternative food sources when the soil becomes hard. They eat and destroy newly sown cereals, ripening lentils, walnuts, acorns, pumpkin seeds and occasionally potatoes and fruit. They pull young pumpkins and maize plants from the ground in an attempt to obtain seeds.

Rooks will also rip up light soils by pulling out tufts of grass looking for soil invertebrates such as worms and grubs. This can create small cells of damaged groundcover which can trigger erosion in lighter soil types.

These birds are also highly territorial, meaning that they can over take environments suited for native species.

Control methods

Contact Council's biosecurity officers if you have seen or suspect the presence of Rooks.

Important note: It's important not to attempt to shoot these birds. This is frighten their connected populations and cause them to relocate causing them to reneest, eventually increasing their numbers in areas that are hard to control. The approach councils throughout New Zealand have taken to eradicate Rook populations is to poison their nests in order to successfully eradicate them. Therefore shooting at these birds greatly compromises that control approach.

More information

One known population remains on the East Coast/Tairāwhiti region around the area of Te Puia.

Similar species: The most common similar exotic bird found in New Zealand/Aotearoa is the magpie (both member of the Corvidae family). Rooks are larger by around 30% and differ with their calls and have more of a gliding flight behaviour.

[Report this pest](https://www.gdc.govt.nz/council/contact-us)

<https://www.gdc.govt.nz/council/contact-us>

Notify Council

If you have seen or suspect the presence of Rook you must report the sighting to Gisborne District Council immediately. The following information will be helpful, date and time sighted, location of where it was sighted, if it's a lone rook - flying, nesting, feeding, or if it's a flock of rooks - roosting, nesting, feeding.

Management programme

- Eradication

Rules

- This pest species is a priority for Council's Biosecurity.
For more information about this Rule, refer to our Regional Pest Management Plan page 23, under Related Links.
- No person shall attempt to kill rooks or control rookeries without prior permission from an authorised Council staff member.
- All occupiers who are aware of these pests on the land that they occupy have a duty to inform Council of the presence of these pests.
- No person will transport or have possession of this unwanted organism into or around the East Coast/Tairāwhiti Region.

What's council doing about this?

Rooks require professional control - please contact the Gisborne District Council.