

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. However, in the Waikato region the very low number of rooks remaining means any rookeries seen may contain only 2-6 birds. In the Waikato they generally build their rookeries in pine or *Eucalyptus* trees often in areas where they have nested before. A typical rookery holds 3-7 nests. 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 features below and characteristics of each species over the page 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.

Rookeries



Rooks nest in rookeries, most often in eucalyptus in the Waikato region. The large nests are built with twigs, and lined with a range of available nature materials. They are roughly cup shapes and visible in silhouette in tree canopies.

Identifying Features

			
	Rook	Magpie	Blackbird
Plumage	Almost entirely black with a purplish gloss. Cluster of 'baggy trouser' like feathers on upper leg.	Black with blue iridescence, with white hind/neck, mantle, rump and shoulder patches.	Black (male) and dark brown with light brown/grey throat (female)
Size	30-50cm long	35-40cm long	Up to 25cm long
Common call/s	'Kaah', 'caw, kaah, kroh, gag' or 'kiu'	'Quardle oodle ardle wardle doodle'	Tuneful call. Sharp repeated call 'tchink' if disturbed/threatened.
Distinguishing feature/s	Large black bird. Dark brown eye. Bare skinned light grey face. Long pointed dark grey/black bill.	Large black and white bird. Red eye. White markings on wings and tail. Whitish/blue-grey bill with back tip.	Smaller bird. Yellow circle around eye. Bright yellow bill (male), light brown bill (female).

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 rook@waikatoregion.govt.nz.

Every spring, Waikato Regional Council asks landowners to report rook sightings so that council can undertake surveillance to locate any nests and control them. Spring is the best time of year to look out for rooks as it's their breeding season, when they start congregating together.

Once a rookery is confirmed by council, a drone may be used to survey for the presence of eggs and/or chicks in nests to identify active nests so we can treat them. Rooks generally build nests in large trees like pines or gums. The largest colony ever found in New Zealand was nearly 1000 nests but, thanks to Council's ongoing control efforts, there are no large rookeries remaining in the Waikato region.



Rook nest with eggs.

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](https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/RPMP)
- [Waikato Biosecurity Strategy 2022-2032 – waikatoregion.govt.nz/biosecurity-strategy](https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/biosecurity-strategy)



Photo: Ronan O'Toole

He taiao mauriora  **Healthy environment**

He hapori hihiri  **Vibrant communities**

He ōhanga pakari  **Strong economy**

For more information call 0800 800 401 or visit [waikatoregion.govt.nz](https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz)
Waikato Regional Council biosecurity factsheet series

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Waikato
REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera ā Rohe o Waikato