



Young rook



Poisoning rook nest

DESCRIPTION

Rooks are large black birds with a purple tint. They are slightly larger than a magpie and can be identified by their harsh KAAH KAAH call.

Rooks are in the same family as crows and jays, and were introduced to New Zealand in the 1860s from Great Britain and Europe, to control insect pests.

Adult birds have no feathers around the base of the beak, while juveniles have feathers up to their nostrils.

Rooks like nesting in the top of tall pines and eucalyptus trees but have been known to nest in other types of trees. Twigs, leaves, and pine needles are used to build their nests which are usually lined with wool and grass. Rooks often nest within metres of each other, in groups called rookeries. They can have up to six eggs.

Rooks are a threat to cropping and horticulture, although they do play a role in controlling insect pests as almost 75% of their diet is insects.

When they target alternative food sources, flocks of several hundred rooks are capable of wiping out a crop in a few days. They may target young crops, especially cereals and new grass, eating grubs, seed or seedlings. Ripening walnuts are also a favourite.

Rooks will impact the native bird population as they harass native birds and restrict their range.

ROOKS IN TARANAKI

Rooks have been prevented from becoming established in Taranaki and sightings are extremely rare. However, rooks are widespread in the east of the North Island, from Wellington to the Hawkes Bay.

They are a threat to agriculture and biodiversity in Taranaki and are included in the Council's Animal Pest Management Strategy. They are targeted for eradication and the Council will take action to eradicate rooks located in Taranaki.

In 2008/2009 there were two confirmed sightings of individual rooks in the Toko and Patea areas.

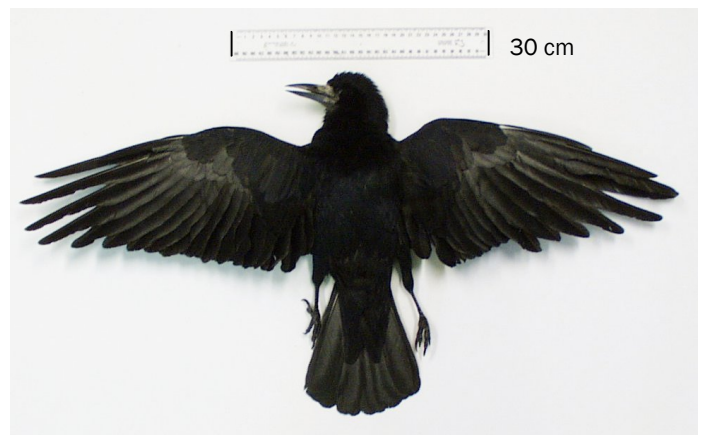
HOW TO CONTROL ROOKS

Rooks are extremely wary, and unsuccessful attempts to control them will only disperse the birds and make them much harder to eradicate. So any action to control them should be left to the Council.

Poisoned ground bait is used to control large numbers of rooks. Baits such as maize or bread and dripping are mixed with the poison DRC 1339 and laid on the ground where the birds are feeding, or on their flight path.

When nests are located a helicopter may be used to apply poison to the nest, eggs or chicks. The birds will then clean the poison from their feathers and be poisoned.

Please contact the Taranaki Regional Council (0800 736 222) if you sight rooks or have any information about their location.



Rook wingspan

For further advice or information about pest animal management contact:

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