



Look out for rooks

Report sightings:

biosecurity@orc.govt.nz

Why are rooks a pest?

Rooks (*Corvus frugilegus*) were brought to New Zealand between 1862 and 1873 to control insect pests, but like many other introduced species, their populations flourished and spread in some areas.

Rooks eat fields of cereals at all stages of growth as well as other seeds that have recently been sown. They also pick at stands of walnut trees.

Large parliaments (the name for a flock of rooks) of these birds could inflict thousands of dollars worth of damage to Otago's grain and new grass crops.

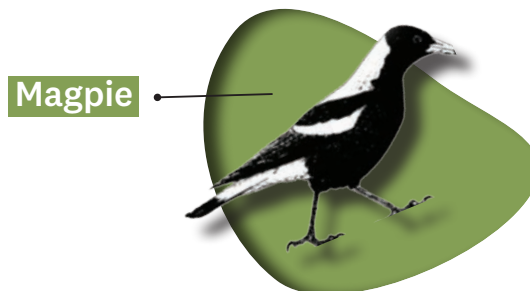
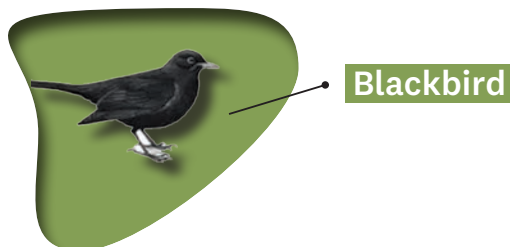
Over the last 40 years, Otago Regional Council (ORC) and Environment Southland have been working together to eradicate these pests with help from the community.

What do they look like?

Rooks are part of the crow family and are large birds with glossy, purplish-black feathers. There are no native crows in New Zealand, so if you see something that looks like a crow, it might be a rook.

Rooks have a powerful beak with white-ish patches of skin around the base. They are social birds, and you can hear them coming by the distinctive sound of their 'kaah'. They 'caw' to keep in contact with each other.

Size comparison



How can you help?

ORC controls rooks from September to November each year. The success of this control programme relies on any rook sightings being reported so ORC staff can pinpoint where they are gathering, feeding and nesting in rookeries.

There is no charge to the landowner for rook control in Otago.

If you see rooks in Otago, contact

- 0800 474 082
- biosecurity@orc.govt.nz

If you see rooks in Southland, contact

- 0800 76 88 45
- service@es.govt.nz

What are the rules?

There is only one rule for rooks in the Otago Regional Pest Management Plan 2019-2029 (RPMP).

Unless you are under the instruction or supervision of an authorised person (for the purposes of our pest plan, an authorised person is a warranted officer under the Biosecurity Act 1993, for example, an ORC biosecurity officer), you cannot

- Poison, capture or trap any rook
- Discharge any firearm at any rook
- Discharge any firearm at or within 500m of any tree containing a rookery
- Damage, disturb or interfere in any way with a rookery

Rooks scare and spread out very easily and need a settled environment for successful control. Therefore, the purpose of this rule is to ensure control efforts are more effective by preventing people from scaring and dispersing rooks.



Rook numbers

ORC's control efforts have reduced rook numbers to around 40 rooks from thousands at its peak. Rooks have previously been spotted in Maniototo, Strath Taieri, Middlemarch, and South Otago around Clinton and Clydevale. While population numbers have stayed steady, there may be a rookery somewhere that ORC doesn't know about, and that's why it's important to report a sighting if you think it is a rook.

