

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Rook: pp 272-273.



ROOK

Family Corvidae

Species *Corvus frugilegus*

Common name Rook

Status Introduced

Abundance Uncommon

Size 450 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Australian Magpie 410 mm)

Habitat Open country not venturing into towns and cities as do Australian Magpies.

Worldwide range Europe to Asia.

New Zealand range Hawkes Bay province to southern Hawkes Bay and Woodville. Scattered colonies are found in the Manawatu, Matamata, Hauraki Plains and Miranda areas. In the South Island mainly in mid-Canterbury and on Banks

Peninsula.

Discussion Rooks were introduced from England in the 1860s. They established colonies in both the Hawkes Bay and mid-Canterbury districts. Because they were blamed for damage to arable crops, many thousands were poisoned and numbers restricted. Nevertheless some have survived. Farmers give them a mixed reception, some enjoying hosting rookeries and breeding colonies on their farms with others despising them. Main damage done by these birds seems to be to maize seedlings and walnut crops. It is interesting to note that in the main arable areas of the UK, where the birds in New Zealand originated from, farmers do not dislike this bird. They regard it as an important alternative to insecticides.

Description

Face The area of rough skin on the face beneath the eye is greyish. **Upper and underparts** Glossy black. **Wings** Black and “fingered” at tips. **Legs** Greyish-brown with shaggy black-feathered thighs. **Bill** Greyish with dark tip. **Tail** Black and rounded at tip.

Conspicuous features

- An overall black bird.
- Greyish face and bill.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Feeds on the ground usually in groups, but occasionally alone.
- Feeding birds often play, chasing each other into the air and tussling.
- At dusk birds seek communal roosts.

Call A “caw caw” is the usual call. Birds are extremely noisy when they leave their communal rookeries at daybreak.

Nest Birds are communal nesters. Nests are made of grass and twigs and placed high up in conifers. Up to 4 bluish, brown-blotched eggs are laid.

Where to find – North Island

South Auckland – Miranda. P. 302.

Hawkes Bay – Between Wairoa to Napier.

Where to find – South Island

Canterbury – Banks Peninsula area.

Canterbury – Ashburton and Geraldine area.

Otago – Middlemarch west of Dunedin and on Highway 87.