

## ENDEMIC SPECIES FEATURE

### RURU

#### Morepork

#### *Ninox novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae*

Ruru, also known as morepork, is New Zealand's only surviving native owl. Their enigmatic 'ruru' call can be heard emanating from native and exotic forests throughout New Zealand. They also emit a variety of mews, yelps and 'crees'. Like most owls, they are nocturnal. They rest during the day in shady roosts, but if spotted, small birds may mob them and force them to move elsewhere.

Ruru cannot move their large yellow eyes within their sockets, however they can rotate their heads 270°. Like other owls, their wing feathers have soft fringes which enable them to fly silently. Their prey includes insects, lizards, frogs, mice and small birds. They usually hunt using a 'perch and pounce' technique, but also catch moths and beetles on the wing.

Ruru are monogamous and territorial. Territories range in size from 3.5 to 7.8 hectares. In late October or November, ruru conceal their nests within tree cavities, hollow logs, thick clumps of vegetation, the forks of trees or on the ground in a hollow beneath tree roots, fern fronds or a rock. A clutch typically contains one to three eggs. Females incubate the eggs alone until they hatch at 29-31 days. After the first week of brooding, males help their mates feed the chicks. Chicks fledge at 35-40 days, but do not become independent for another 6-7 weeks.

At present the ruru's conservation status is 'Not Threatened', though populations may decline due to habitat loss, predation, and poisoning. Nesting females, eggs and chicks are vulnerable to predation from mustelids, cats, possums and rats. Unfortunately, ruru may suffer secondary poisoning from widely available anticoagulant toxins, like brodifacoum, often used to control rodents around homes, in agricultural areas, by pest control contractors and at some conservation projects. Hence, while brodifacoum is an essential tool for landscape scale pest eradications; ideally, it should be used sparingly. Happily, ruru appear to be doing well within the Brook Waimārama Sanctuary likely feasting on the mice present.

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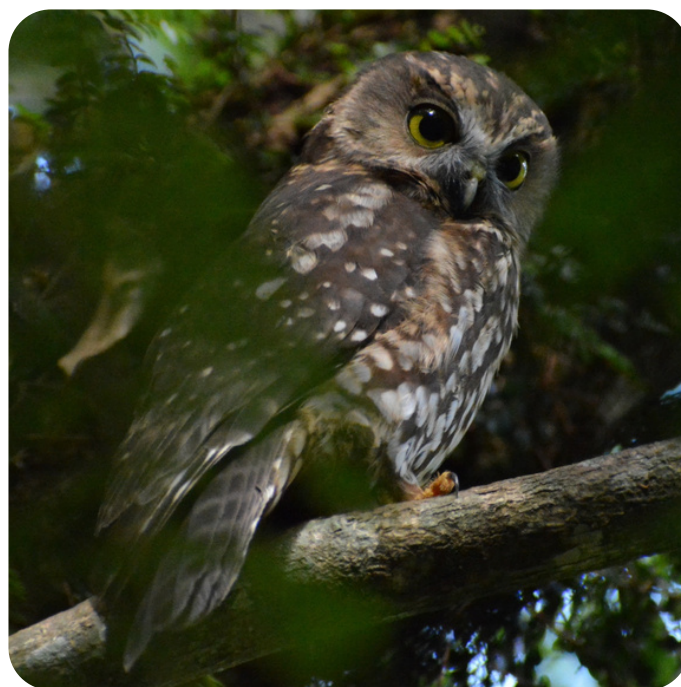


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