

Rats

Rats are furry rodents with short legs, pointed noses and long tails. They are bigger than mice. Before people arrived in New Zealand there were no rats here. There are now three types of rat found in New Zealand: ship rat, Polynesian rat/kiore and Norway rat. All mice and rats are called kiore in Te Reo Māori.

Why rats are pests

Rats are not fussy- they will feed on whatever foods are around at the time: including birds, invertebrates, lizards, fruits and seeds. They will eat the chicks and eggs of native birds and sometimes eat adult birds

Ship rats

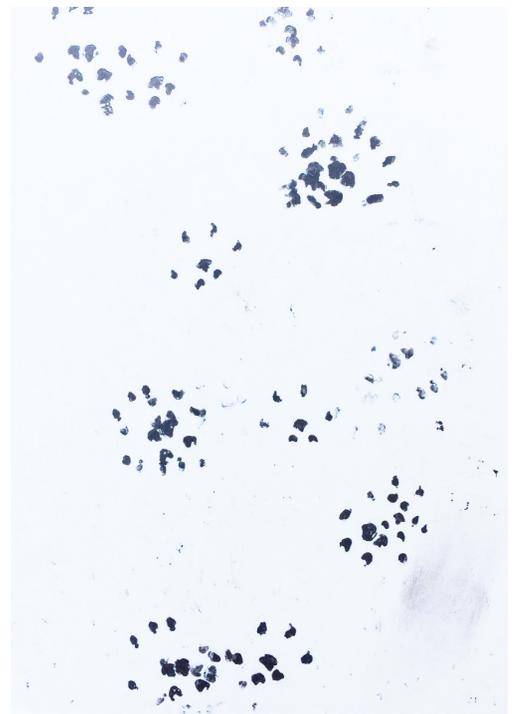
Climbing up to nests is easy for a ship rat and they like to hang out in trees. In ship rats the ears are large and the tail is longer than the body. Because they are such good climbers these rats are the biggest threat to birds, eggs and chicks. They also eat fruit and plants, competing with our birds for food. Ship rats are the most common and widespread species of rat found in New Zealand.



Ship rat in a fantail nest. Photo: DOC

Why were rats brought to New Zealand?

Rats were brought here on boats and ships by early settlers. Most probably came here by accident!



Rat footprints. Photo: Liz Maire



Rat droppings. Photo: DOC

Norway rats

Norway rats are the largest rats in New Zealand. In Norway rats the ears are small and the tail is shorter than the body. Norway rats spend more time on the ground, so will eat invertebrates like wētā, beetles, spiders and stick insects, ground nesting birds and lizards



Norway rat. Photo: DOC



Kiore. Photo: DOC

Kiore

Kiore are the smallest type of rat in New Zealand. They eat animals living on the ground like invertebrates, seabirds and lizards.



Rat comparison. Photo: DOC