

## **Pacific rat/kiore**

Pacific rat/kiore (*Rattus exulans*) are now found only in Fiordland, Stewart Island and some off-shore islands. They were introduced to New Zealand by Maori settlers and have cultural and spiritual values to some Maori.

Kiore is the Maori name for a species of rat (*Rattus exulans*). It is the world's third most widely distributed rat, found throughout the Asia/Pacific area. Kiore are poor swimmers and have reached New Zealand mainland and offshore islands through deliberate and accidental introduction by humans.

They were introduced to New Zealand by Maori settlers in about the 10th century.

Kiore are restricted in New Zealand to Fiordland, Stewart Island and a number of offshore islands. Of the many introduced mammals to New Zealand, kiore are unique because of their association with the migration of Polynesians throughout the Pacific and because of their cultural and spiritual values to some iwi Maori.

Kiore eat a wide range of foods including seeds, fruits, insects, lizards, eggs and chicks. New Zealand's native plants and animals, however, evolved in the absence of mammalian predators and are therefore poorly equipped to compete with, or defend against the impact of introduced species.

## **Ship or common rat**

By contrast the ship rat (*Rattus rattus*), which is more common, has a tail larger than its body, and ears that cover the eyes when pressed forward. Both of the European species are associated with human activity and are found in houses, tips, waterways and cropland.

## **Norway or brown rat**

The Norway rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) is the largest of the two European rats. It is distinguished from the ship rat in that the tail, which is about 180 mm in length, is thick and shorter than the body, which is about 200mm in length, and that the ear of this rat does not reach the eye when pressed forward.

Norway rat

## The threat

Ship rat in Fantail nest

Rats have a major impact on New Zealand's wildlife because they eat birds and their eggs and chicks, lizards, and invertebrates. They also eat a wide range of native fruits and other plant material, which puts them in competition with native wildlife for food.

Ship rats are causing the most damage to our wildlife because they are good climbers, so they are able to get access to most bird nests high in trees. Norway rats are large enough to kill nesting adult seabirds and prey on animals that live, roost or nest close to the ground.

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