

Browsers, how are they a threat?

If asked about threats to kōkako, not many would consider browsers such as deer, pigs and goats. Because they don't directly prey on the birds and chicks, it is hard to imagine them as threats, right?

However, research has shown that browsers deplete kōkako food resources over time. Kōkako rely on the leaves and fruits (and insects) of certain key plants found within the forest. Browsers favour the same, highly palatable plants, consuming seedlings and saplings and sometimes killing mature plants by ring-barking.

Over time their foraging is impacting the regeneration and survival of key plants and reducing the long-term food availability for kōkako (especially during critical times such as the breeding season).

Unfortunately, long-term browsing leads to an eventual change in the structure of the forest understorey, as well as a reduction in seedling establishment, both of which can impact on the long-term sustainability of kōkako populations. Therefore, any work done to support kōkako will ideally include a browser management plan.



Goats



The impact of dama wallaby on the native forest. Wallabies have access to the area on the left and are fenced out from the area on the right.

Photo: Bay of Plenty Regional Council