

Management Recommendations Victoria Park 2021

– prior to 2022 Breeding Season

Report to Belfast City Airport

KerryMackie 20/9/21

Rookery



Development of a Rookery at Victoria Park 2020

The removal of rook nests and associated canopy pruning was undertaken on January 29th 2021 under a temporary BCC license and by professional tree climbers subcontracted directly by Belfast City Airport. 12 remnant rook nests were removed while all trees perceived to have nesting potential were modified by the selective removal of stem/branch unions. A sample of nesting positions were photographed before and after treatment for reference and to later assess efficacy when comparisons are possible later in the of Autumn 2021 (Figs 1a & 1b). An element of ivy control was also exercised to reduce sheltering to 2021 nest locations (Figs 2a & 2b).

Canopy lifting and pruning 29th January 2021



Fig 1a. Before ...



Fig.1b. After treatment



Fig 2a. Ivy growth and rook nest location (pine)



Fig 2b. Ivy providing additional shelter was controlled by cutting stems.

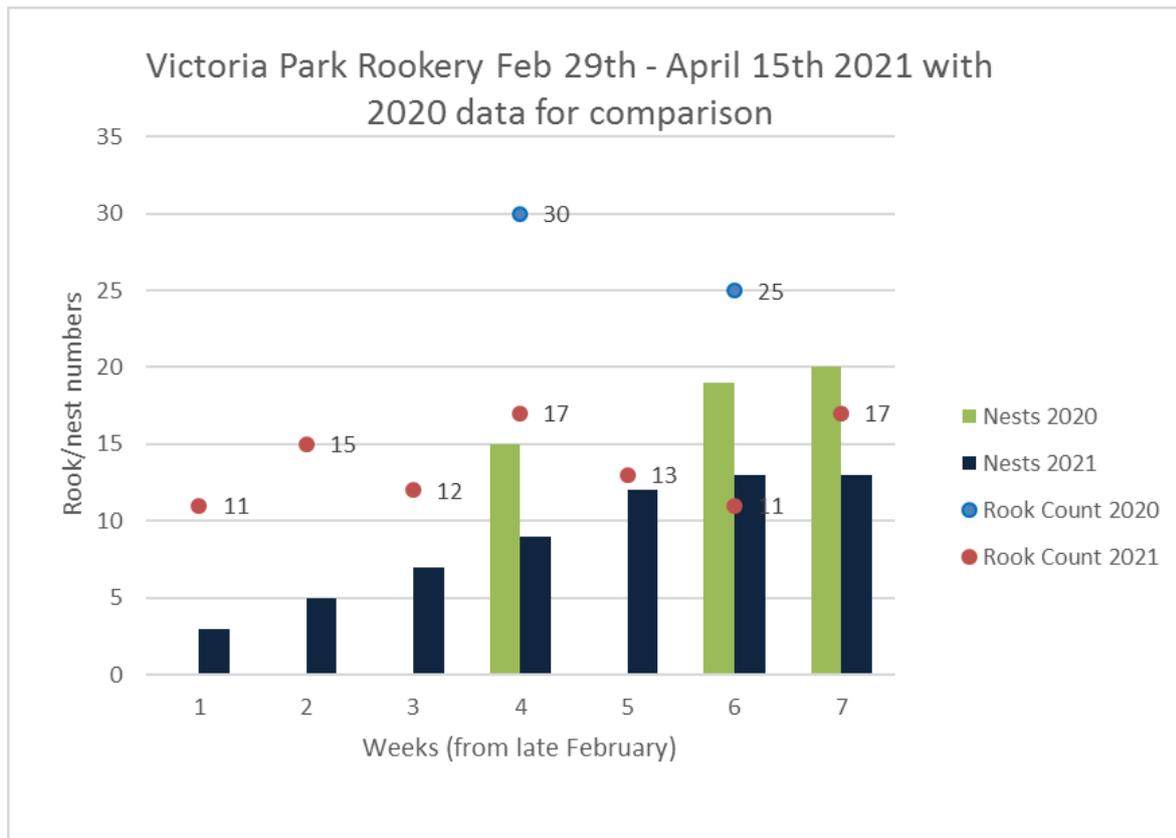


Fig. 3.

Outcome

Rook nests and total rook numbers were monitored from 28th February to 15th April 2021 (Fig. 3) The number of nests built was lower in 2021 by 7 nests (35%), with average flock sizes of 27 (n=2 in 2019) reduced to 14.0 (n=7) and maximum flock size down from 30 to 17. This level of adjustment recorded during the time interval of the first licence period averted the need to pursue more intensive management prescriptions, an option allowed for under part 2 of the temporary licence.

Short term requirements

Belfast City Airport must continue its efforts to minimise the risk of air strikes from rooks at this colony. An additional concern for 2022 is the recruitment into the colony of 2019's natal progeny as it reaches breeding maturity. The airport therefore needs to once again remove nests and reduce the appeal of this plantation still further.

Outline of rook management prior to 2022 breeding season

Ideal window for management : November/December 2021.

Time required : 1-2 days

- Removal of old rook nests and selective pruning of branching forks and other potential anchor points (as previously licenced Jan/Feb 2021), to further inhibit nest building attempts for the 2022 breeding season. An early move ahead of next season is advisable to guide where pruning is necessary, prior to any nests being removed by winter storms.
- Thin (remove) alternate/specific pines (c. 4) - after agreement with park staff - along the south eastern edge of the rookery and reduce the shelter provided to nesting trees behind. Although remaining pines will benefit from extra light at this locality, further thinning/canopy lifting might ultimately be required if rooks continue to nest at this site. Permission to remove pines was granted in the first licence but not exercised at the time with nest removal and pruning receiving priority.
- Continue to reduce shelter provided by Ivy if required.

Additional management prescriptions as described in greylag management report 2021

Due to the incidence in 2021 of a goose laying and hatching a clutch of eggs after the period of licensed management, any subsequent licence period will need to be reviewed and extended to cover the month of June.

In addition, the practicalities to effect egg control on one particular goose nest has proved challenging due to its position 4-5 metres high in a pine tree (see figs 4a & 4b). The Airport would like to reduce branching whereby this tree becomes unusable by geese/or herons but still retains form when viewed from the main path along the southeast edge of the lake.



Fig. 4a Location of pine tree on main island.



Fig. 4b Goose nest