

## Match the threats

Black Robins once lived on all of the islands in the Chatham Islands group but by 1900, people lived on some islands and the black robin lived on one!

By 1980 there were only 5 black robins left in the world. Match a **threat** to **something about them** that shows why this little bird almost became extinct.



### Threats to the Chatham Islands Black Robin

Rodents and cats have probably been the main cause of the black robins' decline.

On the two big islands, large areas of forest were lost. Fire claimed it first and then farmland before the end of the 1800s.

The small pieces of bush that remained were being eaten by wild cattle so these areas were quickly being thinned out.

Today the risks include invasion by rodents, weka or cats, competition from avian competitors such as starlings, habitat loss through fire and the risk of introduced avian diseases.

All black robins alive today are descended from the same two birds – Old Blue and Old Yellow.

This means they share the same genetic background or DNA so a single disease could affect them all.

### DOC Recovery Plan

### All about the Chatham Islands Black Robin

They get their name from the sooty black colour of their feathers, legs, feet and bill. Their eyes are dark brown and they live to be 6-13 years of age.

Females are usually smaller than males, they moult between December and March and are about the size of a sparrow with longer legs.

Black robins hunt for food during the day and night, have good sight for seeing in the dark and live in woody vegetation, under the canopy of trees.

To shelter from the strong winds and rough seas around the islands the black robin spends a lot of its time in the lower branches of the forest and beneath the branches of the akeake trees.

They make short flights from branch to branch and do not fly very far.

They prefer flat areas of the forest with deep 'litter' layers - that's the dead and composting leaves and other vegetation. It's full of black robin food like grubs, cockroaches, weta and worms.

Males will patrol and defend their areas and females may chase away other females. They usually stay with their breeding partner for life and generally start to breed at two years of age. Their beautiful song can be heard a lot during the breeding season.

The female makes the nest in hollow trees and tree stumps and while she lays and incubates the eggs the male will feed the female so she can rest.

One, two or even three eggs are laid between early October and late December and a second clutch may be laid if the first is unsuccessful. Eggs are creamy in colour with purple splotches. The female will sit on them to keep them warm until they hatch in about 18 days. Both parents help to feed the chicks.

Young robins stay in the nest for about 23 days, but the parents keep feeding them until they are about 65 days old. This is much longer than other birds of the black robins size. Chicks often spend the first day or two, after leaving the nest, on the ground.

**Adapted from [www.kcc.org.nz](http://www.kcc.org.nz) The Kiwi Conservation Club. A great site!**