

The Kakapo: A fascinating parrot on the verge of extinction

Moumita Mazumdar

Kakapo "Trevor" feeding on ripe poroporo fruit. Maud Island, New Zealand

THE Kakapo (*Strigops habroptilus*) belongs to the family Psittacidae, also known as the "owl parrot" as its face resembles an owl. Kakapo is native to New Zealand and is a critically endangered bird. This ground-dwelling rare creature possesses many remarkable features, making it unique among parrot species. Kakapo is the world's heaviest parrot species, weighing up to 4 kilograms. The large, nocturnal, flightless moss-green Kakapo has a unique charm and a tale of resilience that captivates the hearts of many.

The forest-dwelling Kakapos are solitary birds that prefer the serene solitude of the forest. Despite being heaviest, they forage long distances and can climb high into the trees. They

are recognised for their gentle and curious behaviour. They are vegetarian and feed on native plants, fruits, seeds, and occasionally insects. Unlike most parrots, Kakapos cannot fly as they lack the keel on the sternum and have relatively short wings for their size. Instead, they use their strong legs and muscular build to move around the forest floor. Their well-developed sense of smell, complimenting their nocturnality, favours the successful foraging for food in the dark.

With its moss-green feathers, it easily camouflages in its forest surroundings. Kakapos are unique among flightless birds as they adopt a "lek" breeding system, during which the male Kakapos gather in a specific area and compete to