

7 billion people – fewer than 160 kākāpō



What is a kākāpō?

The kākāpō (*Strigops habroptilus*) is a large, flightless and nocturnal parrot, with a life expectancy of up to 90 years. Kākāpō (pronounced 'car-car-paw') translates as 'night parrot'.

- Whiskers**
Kākāpō have whiskers surrounding their faces. Scientists are still not sure what these are for!
- Large ears**
Good hearing is very important for a nocturnal bird, to help it find its way and avoid predators!
- Scent**
Kākāpō, especially males in breeding season, produce a strong scent from the uropygial gland near the tail.
- Feathers**
With its soft, downy and colourful feathers, kākāpō are insulated from the cold and well camouflaged to avoid predators.
- Tongue**
A large, strong tongue helps kākāpō crush fibrous plant material for easier digestion.
- Bill**
Their powerful, nimble bills help kākāpō climb trees, fight and feed. Grooves on the inside help extract juices from fruit.
- Boomsac**
Male kākāpō develop air cavities (sacs) in their chests in breeding seasons, which they inflate to make a characteristic mating 'boom'.
- Feet**
Perching, climbing and digging are easy for kākāpō with their zygodactyl feet (two toes forward, two back) and sharp claws.

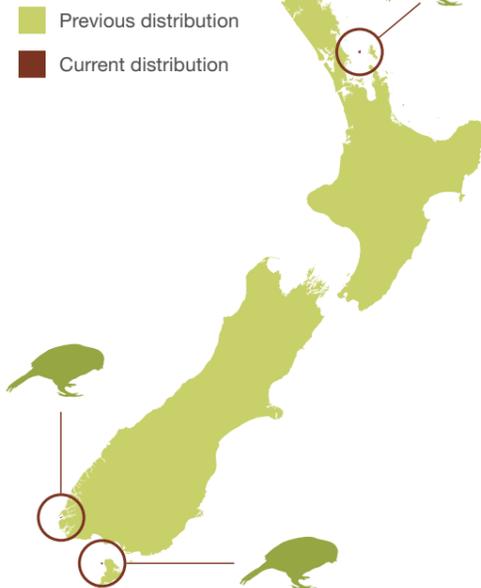
Breeding

Kākāpō nest only every 2-3 years. Breeding is triggered by infrequent, abundant fruit crops ('masts') of certain tree species.

The problem

- Habitat loss**
The arrival of humans to New Zealand saw the burning and clearing of kākāpō habitat.
- Predation**
Introduced mammalian predators are lethal for the ground-dwelling flightless kākāpō.
- Infertility**
Due to a small breeding population, over half the eggs laid are infertile.
- Disease**
Low genetic diversity/population at only a few sites make kākāpō susceptible to disease.

Distribution



Why protect kākāpō?

Kākāpō are unique to New Zealand, and are precious taonga (treasures) to Māori. Kākāpō are only distantly related to other parrots, with biological features all their own. Classified as 'Threatened - Nationally Critical', the kākāpō is one of our most vulnerable bird species – fewer than 160 survive. Without our help, kākāpō would be extinct.

Mō tātou, ā, mō
kā uri ā muri ake nei
For us and our
children after us

The solution

Working together! Our long-term vision is to restore kākāpō to large areas of their former natural range as a functioning part of the ecosystem and relevant to our cultures.

10 Kākāpō Recovery team members

– comprised of dedicated Department of Conservation (DOC) staff – actively manage kākāpō.



4 independent species conservation experts

make up the Kākāpō Recovery Group, which provides guidance. International experts in veterinary science, disease, nutrition and genetics also provide advice.

Research and technology provide new tools for kākāpō recovery:

Supplementary feeding
provides additional food to optimise breeding success if natural food sources fail.



Artificial incubation
increases successful hatching.



Artificial insemination
increases productivity and genetic diversity.



Genetic science
minimises inbreeding to improve productivity and genetic diversity. The programme to sequence the genomes of all living kākāpō is the first time all living members of an entire species have been sequenced.



Technology
Smart transmitters monitor activity remotely; automatic feeding stations and weigh scales help optimise breeding fitness; proximity sensors monitor nests.



1 Ngāi Tahu representative

on the Kākāpō Recovery Group through the Deed of Settlement. Ngāi Tahu is the kaitiaki (guardian) of the kākāpō and DOC's primary iwi partner in managing kākāpō.

DOC also partners with Ngāti Manuhiri, the mana whenua and kaitiaki of Te Hauturu-o-Toi/Little Barrier Island.

1000s of people

– including hundreds of hard-working volunteers, sponsors and donors – are trying to save kākāpō. The more people who know about kākāpō and are empowered to help them, the more likely kākāpō will survive and their numbers increase.



Predator-free islands

are needed until we achieve a Predator Free New Zealand. All known kākāpō now live on three such islands, where they are actively managed to increase their chances of survival.

For more information: kakaporecovery.org.nz

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KakapoRecovery