The Kakapo’s binomial name is Strigops Habroptilus. In theory, every species has a two-part scientific name. The first part describes the genus (Strigops) and the second part is specific to the animal (Habroptilus). This standard makes communication easier between scientists around the world!

Both parts of the Kakapo’s binomial name are derived from Ancient Greek. “Strigos” means owl, “ops” means face, “habros” means soft, and “pitlon” means feather. If taken literally, the name translates to: “Owl face soft feather”.

The eyes of the Kakapo face forward which is more common in owls than a parrots. This is where “owl face” comes from. The feathers surrounding the eyes also have a different texture from the rest of the Kakapo resembling whiskers more than feathers.

A relatively short wingspan and lack of flight muscles have rendered the Kakapo flightless. Thus, the feathers do not need the stiffness and strength necessary to fly allowing them to be exceptionally supple and earning Kakapos the specific name “Habroptilus” or “soft feather”.

A kakapo is an expert at hiding amount the ferns with its camouflage coloring. The combination of moss-green and yellow mottled with black or a dark brownish make it vanish while stationary. Mottled means spots or smears of color. This pattern is seen in many different animals.

The feathers may be soft, but the feet are certainly not. They are large, scaley and zygodactyl. That’s a fancy way of saying they have two toes facing forward and two toes facing backwards. Making something akin to an ‘X’. This is a trait among all parrots.