

Fact File: Rainforest Potoo

A Strange-Looking Bird

Potoos are noisy, strange-looking birds that can be found in the canopy of the Amazon rainforest. There are several types of potoo, including the common potoo, the great potoo and the long-tailed potoo. The great potoo is the largest of the potoo species.

These birds are nocturnal so are mainly active at night. They spend their days perched upright on trees or branches. They make a distinctive squawking sound, which can sound quite haunting, and they are at their loudest at night. The common potoo's song has been described as sounding like the words 'poor me, poor me, alone'.



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Appearance

Potoos have huge, gaping mouths and large, yellow eyes which provide the bird with excellent vision. Their feathers are brown, grey and black, and are perfect for giving the bird camouflage among tree trunks and bark. Often, potoos can be found perching vertically, blending into their surroundings with an appearance resembling a broken tree branch. Their camouflage is so effective that very few people have actually seen the bird in the wild.

Diet

The potoo mostly eats bugs and insects, including grasshoppers, moths and beetles. They use their huge eyes for spotting flying insects in the dark and their wide mouth for capturing them and swallowing them whole.

Habitat

Potoos can be found in humid forests in Central and South America. They live in the high branches of trees, camouflaged among the tree bark.

Did You Know...?

- The potoo lays a single egg but generally does not build a nest for it. Instead, the egg is held in a nook or on a stump of a tree branch.
- Both the male and female potoos take turns to incubate the egg before it hatches.



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Noisy Nocturnal Hunters

These birds are nocturnal so are mostly active at night. Their large, gaping mouths are incredibly useful while hunting as they act similarly to a net. Using their excellent vision, the birds will fly towards their prey, open their large mouths, scoop up the prey and swallow it whole. Potoos can also sense movement with their eyes closed.

The potoo is also known for making a distinctive, squawking sound after dark. The common potoo's song has been described as sounding like the words 'poor me, poor me, alone'. The few who have heard this night-time call have described the sound as being 'haunting'.

Potoos are rarely seen flying during the day. Instead, they spend the daylight hours perched upright on trees or branches, taking advantage of their camouflage to remain unnoticed.

Potoos in Danger

As potoos are native to the rainforest, they have suffered in recent decades due to deforestation. While they are not yet considered rare or endangered, their general habitat is at risk and their population is on a downward decline. Like all rainforest-dwelling creatures, their natural homes will become significantly reduced if rainforest destruction continues at the same alarming rate.

Read more about potoos in the Twinkl Originals Key Stage 2 story '[Rainforest Calling](#)'.

Questions

1. In what natural environment does the potoo live?

2. List **two** of the potoo's distinctive features that help them to catch prey.

1. _____

2. _____

3. Using the information from the text, tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
Potoos are mainly active at night.		
Potoos do not usually build nests.		
They spend their days perched upright on trees or branches.		
The great potoo is 70-80cm tall.		

4. Look at the section headed '**Potoos in Danger**'.

Find and copy **two** words or phrases which mean 'have become less'.

1. _____

2. _____

5. Look at the section titled 'Noisy Nocturnal Hunters'. Summarise the key points of the section below.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

6. Why do you think the author has chosen to separate the facts about the potoo into Appearance, Diet and Habitat?

7. Write a caption which could be used next to the image on page 2.

8. Look at the section headed **Potoo Fact File**.

Complete the table below with one piece of evidence from this section to support each statement.

	Evidence
The potoo can be prey.	
Male and female potoos can have shared responsibility in a task.	

9. Give two examples of dangers faced by the potoo.

1. _____

2. _____

10. The fact file is written in a **formal** tone. Find more informal synonyms (words or phrases) for these words:

resembling _____

distinctive _____

dwelling _____

Why has the author chosen to use a formal tone for this fact file? What is the effect upon the reader?

Answers

1. In what natural environment does the potoo live?

the rainforest

2. List **two** of the potoo's distinctive features that help them to catch prey.

Award 1 mark each for reference to: [up to 2 marks]

- **eyes: excellent vision/detect movement when shut**
- **mouth: very large to catch prey/acts like a net/swallows its prey whole**
- **feathers: camouflage makes it hard for prey to spot it**

3. Using the information from the text, tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
Potoos are mainly active at night.	✓	
Potoos do not usually build nests.	✓	
They spend their days perched upright on trees or branches.	✓	
The great potoo is 70-80cm tall.		✓

Award 2 marks for all 4 rows ticked correctly. Award 1 mark for 3 rows ticked correctly.

4. Look at the section headed '**Potoos in Danger**'.

Find and copy **two** words or phrases which mean 'have become less'.

Accept: (downward) decline, (significantly) reduced

1 mark for each. Up to a maximum of 2 marks.

5. Look at the section titled 'Noisy Nocturnal Hunters'. Summarise the key points of the section below.

- 1. Potoos are mostly active at night and are well adapted to being nocturnal.**
- 2. Potoos have a distinctive and haunting call which sounds like 'poor me, poor me, alone'.**
- 3. Potoos are hard to see, especially in the daytime when they use camouflage to hide.**

Award 1 mark for a suitable summary of each of the three paragraphs in the section, up to a maximum of 3 marks.

6. Why do you think the author has chosen to separate the facts about the potoo into Appearance, Diet and Habitat?

Award one mark for each of the following, up to 2 marks:

- **Separating facts into small sections makes the reading more digestible.**
- **Adding subtitles makes it easy to find a specific piece of information quickly.**

7. Write a caption which could be used next to the image on page 2.

Award 1 mark for any suitable caption such as 'Common potoo during the daytime' or 'Common potoo camouflage'

8. Look at the section headed **Potoo Fact File**.

Complete the table below with one piece of evidence from this section to support each statement.

	Evidence
The potoo can be prey.	(Despite their excellent camouflage, they can still) be prey to other animals, such as monkeys or larger birds.
Male and female potoos can have shared responsibility in a task.	Both male and female potoos take turns to incubate the egg before it hatches.

Award 1 mark for each correctly completed section/row. Up to a maximum of 2 marks.

9. Give two examples of dangers faced by the potoo.
- 1. Reference to deforestation/loss of habitat.**
 - 2. Reference to predators/being eaten or attacked by larger animals such as monkeys or falcons.**
10. The fact file is written in a **formal** tone. Find more informal synonyms (words or phrases) for these words:

resembling e.g. **'looking like', 'reminding people of', 'taking after'**

distinctive e.g. **unique, recognisable, different, particular**

dwelling e.g. **living, staying, residing**

Award 1 mark for a suitable synonym for each word, up to a maximum of 3 marks.

Why has the author chosen to use a formal tone for this fact file? What is the effect upon the reader?

Award 1 mark for reference to the idea that using formal language creates a sense of trust that the author is well informed.

Total available marks: **21**