

Miserable-looking fish wins Ugliest Animal award

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A green kakapo on Codfish Island, off the South Island, on June 20, 2012.

The blobfish, a denizen of the Pacific that looks like a bald, grumpy old man, has been named the world's ugliest animal, organisers of the offbeat competition said on Thursday.

More than 3,000 people contributed to an online poll aimed at raising

awareness of unsightly species that play an important role in the ecological web.

The blobfish, a squidgy pink creature capable of enduring otherwise crushing pressures at great depth, is becoming a casualty of deep-sea trawling.

It was a clear winner, snatching 795 votes, said Coralie Young of the British Science Association, which announced the results at an annual festival in Newcastle, northeastern England.

Runner-up was the kakapo, a rare flightless owl-like parrot that lives in New Zealand, and third was the axolotl, a Mexican amphibian also called the "walking fish."

Other candidates were the proboscis monkey, which has red genitals, a big nose and a pot belly, and the Titicaca water frog, which also goes under the less-than-scientific moniker of "scrotum frog."

A total of 88,000 people visited the website where the polling took place, reflecting wide interest in the issue, she said.

"It's a light-hearted way to make people think about conservation," Young said by telephone.

The blobfish's reward is to be enshrined as the official mascot of the Ugly Animal Preservation Society (uglyanimalsoc.com), a loose association of stand-up comedians who humorously champion endangered but visually unappealing species.

"The Ugly Animal Preservation Society is dedicated to raising the profile of some of Mother Nature's more aesthetically challenged children," it says on its website.

"The panda gets too much attention."

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