

Lighting

Frogs, especially nocturnal frogs like red-eyed tree frogs, do not require full-spectrum light for vitamin and mineral absorption. However, they do need some type of lighting to regulate their photoperiod so they know what time of day it is. A low wattage 2% tropical UV bulb, or alternatively, an incandescent bulb on a timer works well for this. If there are live plants in the tank, a full spectrum light will be helpful, but be careful that it is not too strong and the frog has plenty of places to hide. Blue lights may be used at night to aid with viewing.

Enclosure Set Up

A single adult frog should have a 10-gallon tank or larger. If there is more than one frog in the tank, considerably more space is needed, as they will need space to hide and hunt away from each other. A taller tank is preferred over a wider tank. A group of 3–4 frogs can be kept in a 20-gallon tank. Ventilation is very important, so a secure, latched, screen top is recommended. Be sure the enclosure is escape proof as this species is known to explore and can be lost easily once outside of the controlled habitat.

If using a large enough tank, a water area can be created by using a pre-cut piece of glass or acrylic which can be attached to the bottom using a silicone adhesive. Keep in mind that maintenance of this area will require regular cleaning and siphoning. False bottoms can also be made and more natural, but elaborate set ups with waterfalls and filtration created.

Substrate

This can be as simple or elaborate as desired. White paper towels are easy to use, clean, and replace. However, they are known to harbor more bacteria, so a strict cleaning schedule needs to be maintained. Any type of gravel should be avoided, as the frog can swallow the rocks and cause a blockage. Sphagnum moss and ground coconut shell are commonly used substrates. These can be used if including live plants. Avoid using potting soil with bark, perlite, or vermiculite in them. Substrate should be soft to avoid trauma to the skin, allow for easy maintenance, and not be able to be ingested.

Cage Decoration

Provide either live or artificial plants for the frog to climb and hide. Choose species of plants with large, broad leaves that will support the weight of an adult frog. *Philodendron* and *Pothos* are commonly used. Plants can either be in pots or planted in substrate. A few branches for perches should be provided which the frog will use when hunting. Driftwood and cork bark are good choices and readily available from most pet stores. Be cautious of using naturally obtained items, as they must be properly disinfected without using harmful chemicals before being included. Large, smooth river rocks can also be used for decoration and placed in water for the frog to sit on.



Other Tips for a Happy Frog

- Prevent close contact to heating and light sources
- Avoid gravel and other object the frog could potentially swallow, being mindful of how large the mouth is.
- Be sure the enclosure is always completely closed and completely escape proof.

Most Common Disorders of Red-Eyed Tree Frogs

- Trauma
- Internal parasites
- Bacterial infections
- Intestinal impaction/foreign objects
- Metabolic disorders (including nutritional secondary hyperparathyroidism, commonly referred to as metabolic bone disease)

Many commonly seen conditions are the result of malnutrition and/or inadequate housing and are preventable.

Regular visits to your reptile veterinarian should be scheduled to check for parasites and other early signs of disease and to promote a long, satisfying relationship with your Red-Eyed Tree Frog. For help in finding a reptile/amphibian veterinarian in your area, contact the Association of Reptilian and Amphibian Veterinarians (www.ARAV.org) or contact the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners (www.ABVP.com/diplomate).

Additional Resources

Breeding and Keeping Frogs and Toads, W.P. Mara

Care and Breeding of Popular Tree Frogs, P. de Vosjoli, R. Mailoux, D. Ready

Keeping and Breeding Amphibians, C. Mattison

Natural Terrariums, P. Purser

Tree Frogs, D. Edmonds

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HOW TO KEEP YOUR RED-EYED TREE FROG HEALTHY, HAPPY AND SAFE!



RED-EYED TREE FROGS

Red-eyed tree frogs (*Agalychnis callidryas*) are also known as red-eyed leaf frogs. They reside in the rainforests of Central America, from Southern Mexico to Panama and down into South America to Columbia. They are nocturnal, camouflaging themselves on leaves during the day and concealing their bright colors. It is thought that these bright colors flash to startle predators and enable the frog to make its escape. During the day, the back of the frog is a bright leaf green, while at night, this area is a darker, deep green. The belly is a white to cream color. Many frogs will have small, firm white spots on their backs. These are normal and not to be confused with an illness. As the name declares, the eyes are bright to deep red with a vertical pupil. The hands and feet are orange and are partially webbed with circular toes. The side coloring varies by region. Frogs from the northern ranges tend to have more brown to red with dark yellow barring while the southern frogs have blue to purple flanks with more pale yellow barring. Most species in the pet trade are from the southern areas. There are now multiple color morphs available in the pet trade, including albino, which is yellow with pale blue or white flanks and red eyes.

Following purchase, a frog should be taken to a veterinarian experienced with exotic animals for a general health check and fecal exam.

What to Expect From Your Frog

These frogs are better for viewing rather than handling. Red-eyed tree frogs are very delicate and do not take to being handled very well. Handling is stressful and they may injure themselves trying to escape. In addition, their skin is very porous and can absorb what it contacts, which can make them sick. If it is necessary to handle the frog, hands should be clean and free from lotion, medication, perfumes, and any other substance that could be absorbed. Moistens hands with distilled, dechlorinated, or bottled water (anything other than tap water) to decrease the risk of tearing the skin or particles adhering to the skin. Gloves that have been rinsed in distilled water can also be used if it is necessary to handle the frog.

Is Your Frog a Male or Female?

Males are smaller than females. Males will call at night and develop small brown nuptial pads on their forelimbs during the breeding season.

What and When to Feed Your Frog

Red-eyed tree frogs are not picky and will usually eat anything that moves (including other frogs). A varied diet is recommended, as a diet made of a single item will be unbalanced and lead to health issues, even when properly supplemented.

Food items generally include crickets, mealworms, waxworms, phoenix worms, and captive raised Dubia roaches (*Blaptica dubia* usually).

Waxworms are high in fat, so should be used sparingly. Mealworms are high in chitin and if fed too much can lead to intestinal impaction.

All food items should be "gut loaded" prior to feeding if possible. Juveniles should be supplemented with a multivitamin and a calcium supplement twice weekly. Subadults and adults should be supplemented weekly.

WHAT YOUR VETERINARIAN LOOKS FOR IN A HEALTHY RED-EYED TREE FROGS



NOTE: Most, if not all, reptiles and amphibians carry Salmonella bacteria in their intestinal tract and intermittently or continuously shed these bacteria in their feces, so they are unsuitable pets for very young children and those with compromised immune systems. Good hygiene must always be practiced around all reptiles and amphibians, including red-eyed tree frogs. For more information, please see the handout, Salmonella Information for Reptile Owners at <http://arav.org/salmonella-bacteria-reptiles>.



Juveniles should be fed daily, subadults to adults every 2–3 days, and adults 2–3 times a week.

Feed at night when the frog is active and they are more likely to eat right away. This insures that supplements used are consumed instead of brushed off by the insect.

Water

A shallow water dish large enough for the frog to soak in filled with dechlorinated water should be available at all times. The water should be no higher than the height of the frog's nostrils when sitting at rest. Juveniles should have a large rock placed in the dish so they can climb in and out easily. Frogs will often defecate in their water, so it must be replaced daily.

Temperature and Humidity

The daytime temperature of the tank should be between 75–85° F (24–29° C). A lamp that emits heat should be placed above one end of the tank, providing a temperature gradient with one side

of the tank warmer than the other. Select the wattage of the bulb to provide the proper temperature within the tank. Under tank heaters may be helpful, depending on your set up and substrate, but should be used with caution so the frog does not get burned. Nighttime temperatures should be between 68–75° F (20–24° C). A ceramic heat emitter or red heat emitting bulb may be needed to maintain these temperatures. Do not use a white light at night for heat, as this will disrupt the frog's photoperiod. Accurate measurement of temperature is very important. This can be achieved with digital thermometers, laser temperature "guns," or appropriately placed "dial" thermometers. Place them lower in the tank where the frog sits, not high in the tank next to the heating elements for a more accurate picture of what the frog's environment actually is.

These frogs require a high level of humidity, usually 60–70%. This can usually be achieved by keeping a bowl of dechlorinated water in the tank, slightly damp substrate, and misting the cage with distilled water 1–2 times daily. Do not allow the tank to become excessively wet, as too much humidity can lead to health problems just as too little humidity can. Humidity may reach 80–100% directly after misting, but should decrease to 60–70% within a couple of hours. Obtain a digital hygrometer for accurate measurement of humidity levels.

Vital Statistics:

Body length

Males 2.0–2.5 inches (5–6.3cm)
Females 2.5–2.75 inches (6.3–7cm)

Body weight

6–15 grams

Age of sexual maturity

1 year

Longevity

4–10 years in captivity