



\*Patrick Charles

## Budgett's frog (*Lepidobatrachus laevis*)

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### **An Appetite that's not on a Budget**

The Budgett's frog is a large, unusual aquatic to semi-aquatic species of frog indigenous to the Gran Chaco region of South America, ranging from northern Argentina, southern Paraguay, and much of Bolivia. Budgett's frogs are also sometimes known as the Paraguayan horned frog or "Freddy Krueger" frog due to its aggressive defensive nature and its ability to emit a shriek or scream when disturbed or threatened. During periods of dry or otherwise unfavorable conditions, Budgett's frogs will also aestivate for several weeks or even months at a time, by burrowing several feet under the soil or earth, and forming a mucous-like membrane around their bodies in order to retain moisture and humidity, and in order to prevent them from drying out or desiccating.

Budgett's frogs are largely sedentary, aquatic to semi aquatic ambush predators. The Budgett's frog is a large, pudgy bodied frog that ranges in color from pale olive green to pinkish green often with lighter green to yellowish spots or mottling. The limbs are short, mouth is very large, and eyes are set high atop their heads. These frogs are popular and relatively easily kept frog species in the pet industry and captivity, given their overall water quality and environmental conditions and care are met.

### **Taxonomy**

**Life:** All living, physical, and animate entities

**Domain:** Eukaryota

**Kingdom:** Animalia

**Phylum/Sub Phylum:** Chordata/Vertebrata

**Class:** Amphibia

**Order:** Anura

**Suborder:** Neobatrachia

**Family:** Ceratophryidae

**Genus:** *Lepidobatrachus*

**Species:** *Lepidobatrachus laevis*\*

*\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

### **Lifespan and Longevity**

If provided the proper care, Budgett's frogs can attain longevity of up to 15 to 25 years or more.

## **Distribution and Habitat**

The Budgett's frog is an unusual aquatic to semi-aquatic species of frog indigenous to the Gran Chaco region of South America, ranging from northern Argentina, southern Paraguay, and much of Bolivia. Within this range, these frogs can be found in a variety of aquatic to semi-aquatic habitats and environments, including seasonally flooded grasslands, tropical to sub-tropical forests, and other flooded areas, temporary or ephemeral ponds or pools, slow moving or stagnant inlets of lakes, slow moving rivers and streams, ditches, and other similar bodies of water.

## **Origin/History**

*Lepidobatrachus laevis* Budgett, 1899.

Relatively little is known about the history of Budgett's frogs in the pet trade. Once rarely bred in captivity, these frogs became much more readily available at reptile expos, pet stores, and online thanks to captive breeding of these frogs.

## **Experience Level Required**

Intermediate/Moderate.

## **Size**

Budgett's Frogs are large frogs that typically reach 4 to 6 inches as adults.

## **Housing and Enclosure**

***Enclosure System: Primarily Aquatic.*** Housing must be sealed and escape proof with a secured lid or aquarium hood. Budgett's frogs are not overly active frogs and can be kept in a 10 to 20 gallon aquarium with a secured top. Budgett's frogs are largely aquatic, and should be maintained in about 2 to 3 inches of water as juvenile frogs, and anywhere from 6 to 9 inches of water for adults. Water temperatures for these frogs should be maintained at around 77 to 82 degrees F. Adequate filtration should also be provided, but these frogs do not tolerate faster flowing water. Substrate is not required when housing Budgett's frog, but if it is used, aquarium sand or gravel can be used, but additional care should be taken that frogs housed on a substrate are monitored and do not ingest substrate. Additional decorations such as live or artificial plants, furnishings, and hiding opportunities should also be provided, as well as a basking dock, substrate dam, or access to dry land in the enclosure.

## **Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity**

Budgett's frogs have simple and undemanding heating and lighting requirements in captivity, and do not require additional UVA/UVB lighting, although providing it in moderated amounts can be greatly beneficial for their health, immune system, and overall wellness. For any supplemental heating that may be needed, use a low wattage incandescent or UVA/UVB bulb, radiant or ceramic heat emitter, or UTH (under tank heating element). When it comes to temperatures, these frogs can be kept within 75 to 85 degrees F. Create a thermal temperature gradient using any of the products or methods above. More specific lighting, heating, and humidity product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well. Humidity is not as important with Budgett's frogs, as these frogs are mostly aquatic.

## **Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition**

***Insectivorous to Carnivorous;*** Budgett's frogs can be voracious predators in the wild, and will feed on a variety of insects, arachnids, worms, and other invertebrates. They may also

occasionally catch and consume smaller vertebrates as well including small fish, and other reptiles and amphibians. These frogs in captivity should be fed 2 to 3 times weekly. They are very sight oriented feeders, and will eat feeder crickets, roaches, earthworms, redworms, bloodworms, or mealworms as well as feeder fish and occasionally pre-killed rodents of appropriate size, although these prey items should be given only sparingly. They can also be given many commercially available pelleted diets, or freeze dried foods, but these must be animated. Do not overfeed these frogs, or obesity and other health issues can become concerns. Feeder insects should be gut loaded by provided them a quality diet containing vitamins and minerals. Gutloading and dusting insects with vitamin D3 and calcium supplements 1 to 2 times weekly for added nutritional value will greatly benefit the health and well-being of these frogs. Feed them using tongs, forceps, or otherwise in the enclosure or in a dish and not by hand, as they can become acclimated enough to mistake a moving hand or finger as food during feeding. More specific dietary and supplementary product suggestions and recommendations that can best suit one's needs, as well as those of one's animals can be given as well.

### **Handling**

Budgett's frogs are soft skinned amphibians with permeable skin and should avoid being handled if it is not necessary. These frogs can be aggressive and inflict a painful bite to a careless finger as well. All amphibians breathe and respire through their skin, as well as absorb water through this means. It is therefore important to avoid wearing any chemicals or lotions on your hands, which can be potentially harmful or even fatal to amphibians. It is also important to wash or rinse hands thoroughly, and ensure they are adequately moistened before and after handling any amphibians in order to prevent them from drying out.

**\*\*Also be sure to practice basic cleanliness and hygiene associated with proper husbandry after touching or handling any animals or animal enclosures to prevent the possibility of contracting salmonellosis or any other zoonotic pathogens\*\***

### **Contact**

Authored by Eric Roscoe. For any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns regarding this animal, group of animals, or this care sheet, please email and contact:

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