



**Photo Credit: Brian's Wild World*

Clown Tree frog (*Dendropsophus* spp.)

“The Greatest Treefrogs on Earth”

Clown treefrogs belong to a large genus of approximately 95 species of new world treefrogs widely distributed in Central and South America. They may also be known as the Fitzinger Neotropical treefrogs, or simply yellow treefrogs. These treefrogs are medium sized to large treefrogs that can be quite variable in appearance depending on their exact species. These frogs can occur broadly in Central and South America, from southern Mexico, through Central America, and into northern Argentina and Uruguay. They are also found in the Amazonian basin in Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, French Guiana, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Colombia.

They usually have a brown, reddish, to dark reddish brown ground color with variable amounts of lighter yellow, cream colored, or light brown or tan oblong stripes, blotches, or other markings on the dorsum and limbs. The toes, toe pads, and digits are often a brighter red or reddish orange in color. Clown treefrogs breed and reproduce in and around temporary ponds and other wetlands where eggs are deposited on overhanging leaves and other vegetation, and drop into the water below upon hatching.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Amphibia

Order: Anura

Suborder: Neobatrachia

Family: Hylidae

Genus: *Dendropsophus*

Species: *Dendropsophus* spp.*

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, clown treefrogs can attain longevity of at least 4 to 5 years or more.

Species

Within the pet and herpetocultural industry, a few species are most prevalent. These include the

Schreve's Sarayacu, or Clown Treefrog (*Dendropsophus sarayacuensis*) and the Beireis', or White Leaf Treefrog (*Dendropsophus leucophyllatus*). A reticulated, or "giraffe" phase of *D. leucophyllatus* is also commonly seen. The Hourglass Treefrog (*Dendropsophus ebraccatus*) is also available, and is included for its care requirements in this document.

Distribution and Habitat

Clown treefrogs are a large and widely distributed genus of treefrogs found in the New World. More specifically, and depending upon the species, members of this genus can occur broadly in Central and South America, from southern Mexico, through Central America, and into northern Argentina and Uruguay. They are also found in the Amazonian basin in Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, French Guiana, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Colombia. These arboreal treefrogs occupy the tropical to sub-tropical understory and lower canopy vegetation of tropical rainforests, forests and woodlands, and ecotone, or forest edge habitats within this range.

Origin/History

Dendropsophus spp. Fitzinger, 1843. Specific species would have other authors first describing them during other years.

Clown treefrogs would typically be available typically as wild caught animals or field collected imports that did not survive for long. However, captive bred hourglass or clown tree frogs would tend to be much hardier captives. An exact timeline for when clown treefrogs first entered herpetoculture is lacking; however, increasing numbers of these tree frogs from captive-bred sources are becoming more readily available.

Experience Level Required

Intermediate/Moderate.

Size

Adult clown treefrogs are mid-sized to large treefrogs that typically reach up to 1 ½ to 3 ½ inches.

Housing and Enclosure

Enclosure System: Primarily Moist-Arboreal. Housing must be sealed and escape proof with a secured top or aquarium hood. Adequate ventilation, however, is still important for maintaining clown treefrogs. A 10 to 15 gallon tall glass aquarium or terrarium or similar sized enclosure is suitable for a pair clown tree frogs. Provide several horizontal perches for the frog to climb and rest on. Provide additional live or artificial foliage, logs, cork bark, or other cage furnishings for added security and aesthetic appeal. Substrates that retain some moisture and humidity should be used such as paper towels, or sphagnum moss, cypress mulch, crushed coconut shells, or potting soil at least 2 to 3 inches deep for more naturalistic enclosures. Substrate should be pesticide free. Provide a large, shallow water dish in the enclosure and change at least 2 to 3 times weekly. Spot clean daily. Any enclosures and substrates used should retain higher levels of humidity for this species that can be achieved by regular, daily misting, and by providing adequate humid hides and microclimates for these frogs.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Clown treefrogs 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). Clown tree frogs can be hardy species to maintain, and can be kept at a range of temperatures described below. Maintain

these frogs at ambient temperatures of between 65 and 80 degrees F, but do not allow for temperatures to drop below or rise above this range. Provide a 12 to 14 hour light cycle if overhead lights are used. 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. Clown treefrogs should be maintained at, or around humidity levels of 60 to 70%.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Insectivorous; In the wild, clown tree frogs are insectivorous, and will eat insects, arachnids, and other invertebrates they can catch. In captivity, feed clown treefrogs a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, and waxworms. They can also be fed microfauna including springtails, isopods, and fruit fly cultures. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. Clown treefrogs also require additional calcium and vitamin D3 supplementation 1 to 2 times weekly or as otherwise directed for optimal health and development. This is in order to prevent Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD) and other growth and nutritional deficiencies. Their feeding frequency will depend on the age, size, and overall health of your animal. Use care as to not overfeed them, as obesity and other health related issues can become an issue. 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

Clown treefrogs are rather delicate and fragile amphibians that should only be handled when necessary. 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

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Disclaimer: Note that the information provided in these, or any care sheets, are not intended to be all-exhaustive, and further research and care should always be sought and provided when it comes to any species one may prospectively be interested in. These care sheets are also not intended to serve as substitutes for professional veterinary medical care and husbandry should any animal require it. Always seek proper and professional veterinary care for any animal should the need arise, and be prepared ahead of time for any and all husbandry costs and expenses that may occur with any animal beyond the initial purchase. Any animal owned is ultimately a matter of personal/individual care and responsibility. We cannot make any claims or guarantees regarding any information in this care sheet therein. This care sheet may be reprinted or redistributed only in its entirety.

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