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Gray Treefrogs, Cope's & Eastern (*Hyla/Dryophytes chrysoscelis*) and (*Hyla/Dryophytes versicolor*)

Cold Tolerant, Beautiful Natives

Gray treefrogs are a relatively small, arboreal treefrog species. They are relatively small treefrogs with somewhat warty skin ranging in color from light to dark gray, tan, brown, green, to lime green. They also have some degree of color changing abilities despite being called “gray” treefrogs. There may be large, darker irregular shaped dorsal markings or a plain dorsal surface as well, and there is oftentimes a yellowish-orange groin region. The two species cannot be reliably distinguished from one another visually. The only identification markers are their differing calls, and differing chromosome sets. Gray treefrogs will frequently call during or after rain in the spring and early summer. The Cope's gray treefrog call is a harsh, shorter, and nasal sounding trill somewhat like an insect, while the Eastern's call is also a trill, but is longer, more melodic, and birdlike. Gray treefrogs are relatively simple and inexpensive pets to maintain for the novice and advanced enthusiast alike.

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: *Hyla/Dryophytes*

Species: *Hyla/Dryophytes versicolor** and *Hyla/Dryophytes chrysoscelis**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, gray treefrogs can attain longevity of up to 5 to 6 years.

Distribution and Habitat

Both species of gray treefrogs, the eastern and the Cope's, occupy a wide range over much of southern to southeastern Canada, from southern Ontario, through the Midwestern, eastern, southeastern, and northeastern United States. These two species of treefrogs can be quite variable

in their distribution and habitat patterns, and in some areas, both species may overlap, while in others, only one or the other species may be predominant. Within this range, gray treefrogs can occur in wooded or shrubby areas near, or surrounding temporary to permanent bodies of water, including mixed or deciduous forests and woodlots, wooded suburban and residential areas, agricultural areas, savannahs, prairies, swamplands, ponds, lake margins, old fields, and ditches.

Origin/History

Dryophytes versicolor (LeConte, 1825); *Dryophytes chrysoscelis* (Cope, 1880).

Gray treefrogs would become popular, hardy, and relatively easy to care for pet frogs, although the timing of when they first began to be kept in the pet trade is not known. These small treefrogs, however, have probably been in the pet trade for many decades. They would, and continue to be fairly commonly available, both from wild-collected and captive-bred sources at pet stores and reptile expos.

Experience Level Required

Novice/Beginner.

Size

Adult gray tree frogs of both species typically reach up to 2 to 3 inches.

Housing and Enclosure

Enclosure System: Primarily Moist-Arboreal. Housing must be sealed and escape proof with a secured top or aquarium hood. A 10 to 20 gallon tall glass aquarium or terrarium is suitable for 1 to 4 gray tree frogs. Provide several horizontal perches for the frog(s) to climb and rest on. Provide additional live or artificial foliage, logs, cork bark, or other cage furnishings for added security and aesthetic appeal. Gray treefrogs enjoy moderate to high humidity. Substrates that retain some moisture and humidity should be used such as paper towels, or sphagnum moss, cypress mulch, gravel, or potting soil 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.

Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Gray 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). They can be maintained at ambient and heated temperatures between 70 and 82 degrees F, and be sure to mist the enclosure at least once daily. 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. Gray treefrogs can typically be maintained at, or around 50 to 60% humidity.

Feeding, Diet, and Nutrition

Insectivorous; In the wild, gray tree frogs are insectivorous, and will eat insects, arachnids, and other invertebrates they can catch. In captivity, feed gray 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. Gray 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

Gray tree frogs will tolerate some level of careful but deliberate handling, but are small and delicate amphibians. Any handling overall should be done sparingly. 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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