



\*Photo Credit: Matthijs Kuijpers/Alamy

## Vietnamese Mossy Frog *[Theloderma corticale]*

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### **Mysterious, Mobile Moss?**

The Vietnamese mossy frog is a highly unusual frog species in that they are heavily cryptic in their coloration and appearance, having green to greenish-brown or reddish brown coloration that highly resembles a mossy rock. These unusual frogs are found from northern Vietnam, and potentially surrounding areas of China and Laos as well. Other similar species in the genus may also occur from northeastern India, northern Myanmar, China, peninsular Malaysia, and Tibet, as well as Indonesia, Thailand, and Cambodia. Relatively little is currently known about the biology or natural history of these frogs, although they are known to breed and reproduce in small water pools within the cavities of trees or bamboos.

This species, although not a treefrog, also has large, sticky toe pads as well. Vietnamese mossy frogs are primarily nocturnal and aquatic, spending much of their time hidden beneath or within rocks, plants, or other debris. In addition to their cryptic coloration used for camouflage, Vietnamese mossy frogs may also curl into a ball and feign death as well. This variety of unique behaviors, in addition to their highly unique and cryptic coloration and appearance, have made the Vietnamese mossy frog a popular and sought after amphibian species to maintain in the pet industry, provided their overall care, husbandry, and environmental requirements 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:** Rhacophoridae

**Genus:** *Theloderma*

**Species:** *Theloderma corticale*\*

*\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

### **Lifespan and Longevity**

Vietnamese mossy frogs are still fairly new to the pet industry, but captive mossy frogs can be expected to live for at least 5 to 8 years or more.

### **Distribution and Habitat**

The Vietnamese mosey frog is a highly unusual species of frog in appearance which is indigenous to the regions of northern Vietnam, and potentially surrounding areas of China and Laos as well. Other similar species in the genus may also occur from northeastern India, northern Myanmar, China, peninsular Malaysia, and Tibet, as well as Indonesia, Thailand, and Cambodia. Within this range, these arboreal frogs occupy moist, lowland evergreen tropical to sub-tropical or monotonous rainforests, forests, plantations, and woodlands, and their adjacent caves and steep, rocky cliffs.

### **Origin/History**

*Theloderma corticale* (Boulenger, 1903).

Until roughly the early to mid-2000's, the genus *Theloderma* was almost non-existent within the pet trade. They were rarely imported and only available to recognized zoological institutions and experienced amphibian keepers. Little was really known or understood about them, and knowledge of their husbandry needs was considerably lacking.

Very few enthusiasts and field researchers had actually encountered any species from the genus in the wild. This meant there was very little information about the habitat that they live in, let alone breeding habits. Several years later the Vietnamese Mossy frog (*Theloderma corticale*) was bred in captivity for the first time. This was a great breakthrough, shedding light on basic husbandry needs, habitat features and breeding requirements (Daryl Lott 2018).

### **Experience Level Required**

Intermediate/Moderate.

### **Size**

As adults, Vietnamese mossy frogs typically reach up to 3 to 4 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 15 gallon tall glass aquarium, terrarium, or other enclosure is more than suitable for housing one, or a pair of these frogs. Being semi-aquatic, Vietnamese mossy frogs will also require a semi-aquatic setup, with about 3 inches of clean fresh water filtered with an appropriate submersible filtration system that can be biological and/or mechanical. Substrate is optional for these frogs, but if it is used, appropriate sized gravel or river stones can be used. Additional furnishings, foraging, and hiding opportunities should also be provided in the enclosure, including rocks and logs, live or artificial plants and other foliage, clay flower pots, driftwood, vines, and/or caves. There should also be opportunities for the frog(s) to be able to bask or completely emerge from the water.

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

Vietnamese mossy frogs have fairly 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). Maintain Vietnamese mossy frogs at higher humidity from around 70 to 80%, and be sure to mist the enclosure at least once daily. Also provide a 12 to 14 hour light cycle if overhead lights are used. Overall, this species can tolerate temperatures between 65 and 80 degrees F, but temperatures should not be allowed to greatly exceed or fall below this range. 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.

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

***Insectivorous***; In the wild, Vietnamese mossy frogs are insectivorous, and will eat insects, arachnids, and other invertebrates they can catch. In captivity, feed mossy frogs 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. Mossy frogs 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**

Vietnamese mossy frogs are a shy and delicate amphibian species that should be handled sparingly, or only 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. They are, however, a fairly easily kept species for both the beginning and advanced enthusiast, and can make for very intriguing display animals as a result.

**\*\*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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