



*\*Photo Credit: Gary Thom*

## Waxy Monkey Tree Frog *(Phyllomedusa sauvagii)*

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### **Self-Cleaning Frogs!**

Waxy monkey tree frogs are also known as the painted bellied treefrog, and waxy monkey frog. They are a relatively medium sized treefrog species with large, distinctive suction cup like toe pads present. The waxy monkey treefrog typically ranges from a solid or uniformly colored waxy lime green to olive or olive brown in its dorsal color with white or paler colored dashes and streaks on the sternum (chest), belly or ventral surface, and undersides of the limbs. This species also has long, dexterous limbs and digits for grasping and climbing (hence its common name of waxy monkey treefrog), and the eyes are large, with silver to silver-gray irises. This species, as well as other Phyllomedusa species have unusual reproductive habitats in that eggs are laid in a curled up leaf or within clumps of vegetation overhanging a small body of shallow water, in which the tadpoles or froglets will drop into after hatching or developing. Waxy monkey treefrogs also have several behavioral and physiological adaptations for reducing water loss through their skin including by secreting uric acid and lipid secretions that these frogs will spread over their bodies by “wiping” themselves with their forelimbs and hind limbs..

### **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

**Subfamily:** Phyllomedusinae

**Genus:** Phyllomedusa

**Species:** *Phyllomedusa sauvagii*\*

*\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

### **Lifespan and Longevity**

If provided the proper care, waxy monkey treefrogs can attain longevity of 10 to 15 years or more.

### **Distribution and Habitat**

The waxy monkey treefrog is a large hylid, or treefrog species with a fairly broad range over the western to northern and central portions of South America. More specifically, this species occurs

from Argentina, to Bolivia, through Brazil, and into Paraguay. Within this range, this species tends to be arboreal, living amongst the moist, and humid foliage of tropical rainforests and forests near temporary ponds, pools, lagoons, and other seasonally flooded wetlands, where their clutches of eggs are laid near, or on overhanging branches and other vegetation over these water bodies.

### **Origin/History**

*Phyllomedusa sauvagii* Boulenger, 1882.

Waxy monkey treefrogs have been captive-bred in the U.S. and in Europe for more than 25 years, although more specific information as to when these frogs first were imported or became available in the pet trade is lacking, unfortunately.

### **Experience Level Required**

Intermediate/Moderate.

### **Size**

Adult waxy monkey treefrogs typically are 2 to 4 inches in size, although they can become slightly larger on occasion.

### **Housing and Enclosure**

***Enclosure System: Primarily Moist-Arboreal.*** Housing must be sealed and escape proof with a secured top or aquarium hood. A 15 to 20 gallon tall glass aquarium or terrarium is suitable for a pair of waxy monkey tree frogs. They can be housed communally up to 6 to 8 frogs depending on the size of the enclosure with 10 to 15 gallons added per frog. Provide several horizontal perches for the frogs to climb and rest on. Provide additional live or artificial foliage, driftwood, 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, 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**

Maintain these tree frogs at relatively lower humidity around 50 to 70%, and be sure to mist the enclosure at least once daily, as well as provide a large, shallow water dish or pan that should be kept clean and maintained regularly. Waxy monkey tree frogs do require additional full spectrum UVA/UVB lighting, and can be provided a low wattage daylight spectrum, ceramic heat emitter, or florescent form of lighting. Maintain these frogs at ambient temperatures of between 75 to 82 degrees F and relatively high basking temperatures of 90 to 100 degrees F for them to be able to seek a desired thermal gradient and to properly metabolize, but do not allow for temperatures to drop below or rise substantially above these ranges. Nighttime temperatures can be allowed to drop to around 75 to 85 degrees F. A 10 to 12 hour light cycle can also be provided. Overall, low relative humidity and high basking temperatures are two key aspects to maintaining waxy monkey treefrogs. 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, waxy monkey tree frogs are insectivorous, and will eat insects, arachnids, and other invertebrates they can catch. They will occasionally catch and consume other smaller vertebrates as well. In captivity, feed Waxy monkey treefrogs a variety of appropriately sized feeder insects such as crickets, roaches, mealworms, superworms, and

waxworms. Feeder insects should be gut-loaded in order to increase their optimal nutritional value. Waxy monkey 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**

Waxy monkey treefrogs are rather delicate and fragile amphibians that should only be handled when necessary. They are not the ideal candidate as an amphibian species to be handled frequently. 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. Once established, the waxy monkey treefrog can be a very hardy and easily maintained pet amphibian for the more intermediate level enthusiast or pet owner.

**\*\*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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