

# The care and maintenance of the Red Eye Tree Frog

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The Dude's guide to the care and maintenance of Red Eye Tree Frogs. Written by: Joshua Halter

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## Overview:

Deep in the heart of the dense rainforests of South America resides one of the most recognized frogs of the planet, the Red Eye Tree Frog. These beautiful frogs are found in Nicaragua, Panama, and Costa Rica. Currently, they are listed safe on the IUCN red list. While habitat destruction, chytrid fungus and pH changes in the rain have occurred, these hardy frogs have been surviving strong in their natural biome. While these different localities have some slight differences many of them can be easily torn apart. In the captive hobby, the most common captive bred available Red Eye Tree Frog are the Costa Rica locale. The main differential between locales are the overall color, tone, and brightness. Nicaraguan Red Eyes have more of a blueish hue to their green with very bright orange feet that greatly contrasts the blue. Panamanians and Costa Rica Red Eye Tree Frogs have the solid lime green color with deep, dense blue side patterning accentuating the orange feet. The below picture is a representative of the Costa Rica locale.



Overall care is the same for each locale, but if you are looking to breed this species, you will want to try to keep it locale specific to ensure pure blood lines. With many amphibians, these beautiful frogs have strict husbandry requirements that must be met for them to properly thrive in your habitat. The Bio Dude strongly recommends a natural, bioactive setup for these frogs

due to their strict requirements. As of October 2018 many Red Eyes are still being imported into the United States in mass, so it is very important to know if your frog is captive bred or wild caught. As of October 2018 - 90% of the time when you see adult Red Eyes for sale they are wild caught. Babies, juveniles and sometimes adults can be purchased as captive bred which is the easiest option as far as husbandry is concerned. Many times, wild caught amphibians come loaded with parasites, fungal infections, nose rub, dehydration, ranavirus and the dreaded chytrid fungus. It is necessary when bringing a new frog into your home that it is properly quarantined and treated for any potential parasites prior to introduction with any other Red Eyes or other animals. Here is a quick look at their life cycle from egg to froglet.

Initial egg deposition. Day 3 - you can see mitosis before your eyes!





Egg development, mainly tadpoles, day 8



They dropped. Day 12



Gaining size. Day 60



Initial wave of froglets emerged. Notice the limited colors with neonatal tree frogs.



A young Nicuarguan locale Red Eye. About 20 days old.



30 days old, Costa Rica locale. Notice the light blue beginning to develop on the sides.

Keeping these amphibians in a natural, bioactive setup allows them to properly maintain their osmotic pressures by staying hydrated and kept at the proper temperatures. Live plants with broad leaves allow them to hide underneath from the sun, allow them to retain moisture throughout the day to be ready for their excursions at night. Keeping these frogs in a natural setup will not only bring out many unique behaviors that they have but allow you to see what makes them so unique as a species to begin with.

#### Caging Requirements:

Female Red Eyes can sometimes reach as large as 3.5-4" and males typically never exceed 2.5-3". While they may not be the largest, these amphibians are very active and need plenty of height and space to feel comfortable. If you are lucky enough to find a captive bred baby, a young Red Eye can easily be kept in a 10 gallon or 12 x 12 x 18 for about 4-6 months depending on rate of growth. It is not recommended to keep a young, single Red Eye in a very large enclosure. This can make it a challenge for them to find food while expending necessary energy needed for proper growth. After they hit the 2" mark, a tank upgrade is necessary. For a single adult, a minimum of a 20-gallon high or 18 x 18 x 24" is required. For groups of 2-4 a 29

gallon or 36 x 18 x 24 is the minimum size. The larger the enclosure, the better your frogs will do and the more enjoyment you will get out of keeping this fantastic species. Here is an example of a larger terraria for this species.





For substrate, it is recommended to utilize the Bio Dude Terra Flora bioactive system. Utilizing the HydroGrow as a drainage layer the excess water flows cleanly out of the Terra Flora. This not only prevents substrate stagnation, it also creates necessary air pockets in the substrate for proper root, bacteria, fungi and microfauna development. To achieve bioactivity with the Bio Dude products, simply utilize the Bio Shot included in the kit. This unique supplement provides necessary bacteria and funguses that provide organic waste break-down as well as provide essential macronutrients to your plants immediately in the form of organic fertilizer rated with a 4-4-4 NPK ratio that is 100% safe for your frogs. For organic and soil health, utilize the Dude's AAA Spag moss, and any leaf litter of your choice to help provide fuel for your bioactive terrarium.

Different woods and plants can be used with their terrariums. Stay away from grapevine or Bamboo as it will mold and breakdown very quickly. The best choices to utilize for this species is



Cork Bark, Ghost Wood, or spider wood. These woods are very mold resistant and breakdown much slower when compared to the others. These woods are also created for mimicking tree branches or the under-canopy which these creatures are so accustomed to. Tropical plants should be broad leaved, tall and provide plenty of natural cover. Plants such as philodendron, pothos, emerald gems, arrowhead vines and other broad-leaved plants will quickly flourish in this particular type of biome. Ferns can be utilized as they love tons of water, but it is necessary to provide them some drier periods throughout the day, so placement is key! Succulents, Cacti, and other drier, arid plants will not survive in this type of biome.

A great example of a broader, leaved plant for your tree frogs.

Being from Central/South America, these amphibians enjoy temperatures between 68-78 degrees F. For short periods of time the temps can exceed 82 but should not be pushed as this can cause neurological damage, or death especially to babies or younger Red Eyes. Air flow and ventilation is key with this species. Stagnant air or limited airflow will quickly cause fungal infections and other issues. Humidity should range between 50-65% throughout the day with mild spikes up to 80% once or twice daily. A Mist King starter system can be utilized, or you can hand mist on your own schedule to get desired results. Do not allow the humidity to drop below 40% for an extended period of time. This can cause them to get dehydrated, suppress their immune system and cause fluctuations with their osmotic pressures which will severely damage their homeostasis equilibrium. These amphibians will thrive with a solid water area in their terrarium or paludarium as long as ventilation is provided. With the majority of their time in the



rainforest living on the under canopy or forest floor, UVB is not required with this species. Higher UVB bulbs 3%+ can cause severe skin damage to your frogs or even kill them.

In captivity, these frogs will enjoy a variety of feeders. Being strictly carnivores, a range of crickets, waxworms and calci-worms can easily be fed to these amphibians. When figuring out which size insect to feed your frogs measure the space between your amphibians' eyes. With that measurement never exceed that size cricket or feeder insect for your frog. For example, young Red Eyes' are fed 1/8" to 1/4" size cricket that matches the space between their eyes. If given a food item too large, such as crickets, the spurs on their legs can cause esophageal tears, so always feed the right size! If you plan on keeping crickets at your home, it is recommended to gut load the crickets to provide more of the essential vitamins, minerals and carotenoids that are needed for homeostasis. With having a 'staple' diet it is important to have your insects be gut loaded with the Dude's Bug Grub or other insect gut loader (not corn based!)

to get your crickets up to par with your frogs dietary requirements. While gut loading is important, there is one more essential step that is imperative for the proper growth of your frog. Dusting the crickets with essential Calcium supplements and Vitamin supplements on a rotating schedule with the gut loading will provide everything your frogs need to be happy and healthy. To dust the crickets or other feeder simply dump them into a plastic cup. Dump a small amount of supplement into the cup and coat them with the powder. Then dump them into the cage and you are good to go! It is recommended to provide calcium at least twice weekly and vitamins at least once weekly

Overall, as a species you really can't go wrong. They are not easy to keep or breed, are beautiful, thrive in smaller to moderate groups when the proper size cage is provided and are very active Tree Frogs. When provided with a natural, self-cleaning biome you are offering the best care, rather than the basic care, as those are the steps that are taken to ensure the long-term health of your frog. Many times, in a natural environment the unique niches, instincts and actions that make these amphibians unique amongst the declining populations on planet earth. If you have further questions, need help with breeding, tadpole development or any other questions regarding this species please do not hesitate to reach out to the awesome staff of the Bio Dude to get you all situated!

-The Dude abides

Josh Halter

The Bio Dude