



\*Captive Bred Specialties

## African Bullfrog (Pixie Frog) (*Pyxicephalus adspersus*)

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### **Big Frogs with Big Appetites**

Pixie frogs are also often known as the African bullfrogs, and are among the largest species of frogs in the world. The second largest frog after the goliath frog, the frogs are typically greenish to greenish brown in color with distinct nodules and skin folds. The snout is short and rounded, with protruding tooth like projections on the lower jaw. The underside is usually pale yellowish to white. To survive the dry seasons or conditions in its natural range, these frogs often “aestivate” underground using their moist skin secretions in a self-constructed seal or “cocoon” until conditions improve. Pixie frogs are voracious carnivores, and as sedentary ambush predators, will eat nearly any other smaller animals they can capture and ingest, including smaller amphibians, reptiles, small birds, and small mammals. They can also be quite cannibalistic under the correct conditions as well. These frogs have powerful jaws, and can inflict a painful bite if handled carelessly. Despite this, they are a popular and easily kept larger pet frog species. If provided the proper care, pixie frogs can attain longevity of 10 to 25 years or more in captivity.

### **Taxonomy**

**Life:** All living, physical, and animate entities

**Domain:** Eukaryota

**Kingdom:** Animalia

**Phylum/Sub Phylum:** Chordata/Vertebrata

**Class:** Amphibia

**Order:** Anura

**Suborder:** Neobatrachia

**Family:** Pyxicephalidae

**Genus:** *Pyxicephalus*

**Species:** *Pyxicephalus adspersus*\*

\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.

### **Lifespan and Longevity**

If provided the proper care, pixie, or African bullfrogs frogs can attain longevity of 10 to 25 years or more in captivity.

### **Distribution and Habitat**

The African bullfrog, or Pixie frog, has a wide range and distribution over much of sub-Saharan

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Africa, from north and east to Somalia, west to Nigeria, and south to the Cape Province of South Africa. Other, closely related species in the same genus also occupy a smaller range within South Africa, from Zimbabwe and northern South Africa, to Mozambique and Zambia. Within these ranges, these highly successful frogs can tolerate a wide range of habitats and environments, including some of the harshest landscapes on Earth. They can occur in seasonally dry, to temporary floodplains and wetlands, arid to semi-arid or moist deserts and scrublands, savannahs, open woodlands and forests, canals, ditches, freshwater lakes and ponds, marshes, and agricultural areas, or croplands.

### **Conservation Status**

IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC).

### **Legal and Regulatory Status (\*Subject to Change)**

Consult with your local, municipal, and state ordinances and regulations for any ownership restrictions.

### **Experience Level Required**

Intermediate/Moderate.

### **Size**

Pixie frogs are sexually dimorphic, with males typically reaching up to 9 to 12 inches, while females are typically smaller, only reaching up to about 5 ½ inches.

### **Housing and Enclosure**

Housing must be sealed and escape proof with a secured lid or aquarium hood. Pixie frogs are not overly active frogs, with a 10 to 15 gallon terrarium with a secure top being suitable for young frogs, and a 20 to 30 gallon sized glass or plastic enclosure or terrarium being suitable for adult frogs. Use an absorbent, naturalistic substrate that enables the frog to burrow such as cypress mulch, sphagnum moss, or coconut husk fiber substrates, all of which will work well. Dampened paper towel can also be used for less aesthetically pleasing substrate. Also be sure to provide a large, but shallow water pan within the cage at all times that the frog can readily enter and exit from, and change 2 to 3 times weekly or whenever fouled. Also be sure to mist regularly to daily to help maintain humidity and hydration these frogs need.

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

African bullfrogs, or Pixie 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. African bullfrogs, or Pixie frogs require somewhat warmer setups than many other frogs and other amphibians, and a thermal temperature gradient should be created within their enclosure. 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). Temperatures should be within 75 to 85 degrees F, and a 12 to 14 hour photoperiod, or day and night cycle can also be provided for them. 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 to Carnivorous*; African bullfrogs, or Pixie frogs can be voracious predators in the wild, and will feed on a variety of insects, arachnids, worms, and other invertebrates. They may

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also occasionally catch and consume smaller vertebrates as well. These frogs in captivity should be fed 2 to 3 times weekly. They are very sight oriented feeders, and will eat feeder crickets, roaches, earthworms, redworms, bloodworms, or mealworms as well as feeder fish and occasionally pre-killed rodents of appropriate size, although these prey items should be given only sparingly. They can also be given many commercially available pelleted diets, or freeze dried foods, but these must be animated. Do not overfeed these frogs, or obesity and other health issues can become concerns. Feeder insects should be gut loaded by provided them a quality diet containing vitamins and minerals. Gutloading and dusting insects with vitamin D3 and calcium supplements 1 to 2 times weekly for added nutritional value will greatly benefit the health and well-being of these frogs. Feed them using tongs, forceps, or otherwise in the enclosure or in a dish and not by hand, as they can become acclimated enough to mistake a moving hand or finger as food during feeding. 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**

Pixie frogs are soft skinned amphibians with permeable skin and should avoid being handled if it is not necessary. These frogs can be aggressive and inflict a painful bite to a careless hand or finger. As with all amphibians, their skin is soft and permeable; Wash hands thoroughly and avoid any lotions, creams, or oils before handling any amphibian.

**\*\*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 the Madison Area Herpetological Society at [info@madisonherps.org](mailto:info@madisonherps.org)

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