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## Coqui Frogs (*Eleutherodactylus spp.*)

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### **Loud and Lascivious Travelers**

Coquis are species of relatively small, secretive tropical to sub-tropical leptodactylid frogs consisting of at least 16 or more species occurring in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, as well as elsewhere in the neotropics from Central to South America depending on the species. The most widespread and well known species is the Coqui Frog, or *E. coqui*, although other species such as *E. johnstonei*, *E. barbudensis*, and *E. portoricensis* have also been widely described. They are also introduced in at least a few areas of southern Florida and elsewhere as well. Coquis spend much of their time in or under leaf axils, leaf litter, tree cavities, rocks, or other debris, and are named for their very loud, two-pitched “co-qui” calls typically made at dawn, dusk, or nighttime. These frogs are also characterized by their direct development from egg to juvenile frog, with their tadpole stage developing inside the egg. These frogs can be highly variable in coloration and appearance, ranging from grayish brown, tan, yellowish or yellowish-brown, to deeper brown, reddish, or orangish, and may either have darker irregular dorsal markings and/or a light dorsolateral stripe and enlarged toe pads present. These frogs are frequent hitchhikers on exotic plants and other imported products, and thus may end up in captivity as enjoyable and easily kept frogs should one choose to do so.

### **Taxonomy**

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

**Domain:** Eukaryota

**Kingdom:** Animalia

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

**Class:** Amphibia

**Order:** Anura

**Suborder:** Neobatrachia

**Family:** Leptodactylidae

**Genus:** *Eleutherodactylus*

**Species:** *Eleutherodactylus spp.* \*

*\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

### **Lifespan and Longevity**

If provided the proper care, Coqui frogs have the potential to attain longevity of at least 5 or more years.

### **Distribution and Habitat**

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Depending on the species, coqui frogs are native to Puerto Rico, the Caribbean including Cuba, the Bahamas, the Cayman Islands, and surrounding territories. It has also been accidentally introduced as cargo, plant, and shipment hitchhikers, or through accidental or intentional pet releases and escapes widely in other areas as well including Florida, the US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Lesser Antilles. Elsewhere in central and South America, these frogs may be found from It is found in Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Bermuda, Colombia, Dominica, French Guiana, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Jamaica, Martinique, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela. These frogs may occupy a variety of tropical to sub-tropical environments, from moist lowland forests, montane forests, shrubland, grasslands, to agricultural or croplands, rural to suburban gardens, or other urban to suburban habitats.

### **Conservation Status**

Conservation status is dependent upon the species. Some are IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC). Others are IUCN Vulnerable (VU), Endangered (EN), or Data Deficient or otherwise Not Evaluated (NE).

### **Experience Level Required**

Novice/Beginner to Intermediate/Moderate.

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

Eleutherodactylus cooki, Eleutherodactylus jasper, and Eleutherodactylus juanariveroi are Endangered Species Act of 1974 listed species. Consult with your local, municipal, and state ordinances and regulations for any ownership restrictions.

### **Size**

Adult coqui frogs are relatively small frogs, ranging from  $\frac{3}{4}$  to about 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches depending on the sex and species.

### **Housing and Enclosure**

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 one to a group of these frogs, but adequate space should still be provided. Coqui frogs seem to be tolerant of and not cannibalistic towards other frogs, but as with any amphibians, at least some care should be taken. Provide several horizontal perches for the frog to climb and rest on. Provide additional live or artificial foliage, 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**

Coqui frogs 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). Maintain these frogs at higher humidity at around 70 to 80%, and be sure to mist the enclosure at least once daily to every other day. These frogs can be maintained at around 70 to 85 degrees F while providing a 12 to 14 hour light cycle if overhead lights are used. Avoid higher or dryer temperatures than these ranges

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above. 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, coqui frogs are insectivorous, and will eat insects, arachnids, and other invertebrates they can catch. In captivity, feed these 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. These 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**

Coqui frogs are small, flighty, and delicate frogs prone to jumping, and handling should typically be avoided unless necessary. 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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