



\*Pioneer West Garden & Pet Center

## Japanese fire bellied Newt (*Cynops pyrrhogaster*)

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### **Primitive, Toad-Like Newts**

Japanese, or Oriental fire bellied newts are a largely aquatic to semi-aquatic species of newt. These are fairly large, stocky newts with a sand paper like skin color of black, dark brown, to olive brown and a typically black and orange to red mottled ventral surface (or underside). These newts can arch their heads and tails upwards to display their brightly colored underside to potential predators, which is known as the unken reflex. In the wild, they can secrete a distasteful toxin if ingested, although these newts in captivity often tend to lose this toxicity. These newts are fairly primitive in their characteristics, and in some ways, may be thought of as the toad-like equivalent among caudates due to their paratoid glands, rough, sand-paper like skin, and defensive habits described above. Fire bellied newts are a very inexpensive and hardy amphibian to maintain for the beginning enthusiast or pet owner.

### **Taxonomy**

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

**Domain:** Eukaryota

**Kingdom:** Animalia

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

**Class:** Amphibia

**Order:** Caudata/Urodela

**Suborder:** Salamandroidea

**Family:** Salamandridae

**Genus:** Cynops

**Species:** *Cynops pyrrhogaster*\*

*\*Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

### **Lifespan and Longevity**

If provided the proper care, fire bellied newts can attain longevity of 5 to 10 years or more.

### **Distribution and Habitat**

These newt species are indigenous to eastern Asia including Japan and China. These newts inhabit shallow, weedy ponds, ditches, small lakes, and other shallow, slow moving pools and bodies of water.

### **Conservation Status**

IUCN Red List Least Concern (LC). In need of updating.

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## **Experience Level Required**

Novice/Beginner.

## **Size**

Adult fire bellied newts reach 2 to 6 inches.

## **Housing and Enclosure**

Housing must be sealed and escape proof with a secured top or aquarium hood. A 10 to 20 gallon aquarium, terrarium, or other enclosure is suitable for a pair of these newts. They can also be kept communally in proportionally larger housing. The enclosure should consist of a primarily aquatic setup on a sand or gravel substrate. An appropriate filter can be used to help maintain water clarity and cleanliness. Also provide ample hiding opportunities in the aquarium using live plants and rocks. Enclosures should be spot cleaned, sterilized, and water cleaned and changed regularly every 1 to 2 weeks.

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

Fire bellied newts 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. Fire bellied newts otherwise do not require any other special lighting or heating unless live plants are also maintained, although water temperatures should be maintained at around 65 to 75 degrees F. For any supplemental heating that may be needed, use a low wattage incandescent or UVA/UVB bulb, radiant or ceramic heat emitter, submersible water heater, or UTH (under tank heating element). They are susceptible to health and husbandry related issues if water temperatures are too cold or too warm for these unusual amphibians. 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;*** Fire-bellied newts are largely carnivorous and opportunistic feeders in the wild, feeding on small fish and fish eggs, a wide variety of insects, arthropods, worms, crustaceans, and other invertebrates. In captivity, these newts are easily fed, and can readily be given chopped nightcrawlers, worms, isopods, feeder crickets, roaches, waxworms, and mealworms at least two to three times weekly, with this being their recommended feeding frequency. Any feeder insects should also be gut loaded and dusted with additional calcium and vitamin D3 supplements as well prior to feeding to ensure optimal nutrition and health. 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**

Fire bellied newts are delicate and sensitive amphibians, and handling should be avoided or kept to a minimum whenever possible. These newts can also possess toxic or irritating skin secretions as well. Ideally, an aquarium net of appropriate size can be used to move aquatic caudates whenever necessary.

**\*\*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**

<http://www.madisonherps.org>

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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