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Reed Frogs (*Hyperolius sp.*) and (*Heterixalus sp.*)

Small Jewels of the Reeds

Reed frogs are small, colorful, and arboreal to semi-arboreal old world frogs belonging to several genera indigenous to much of Sub-Saharan Africa and Madagascar depending on the species. There are well over 180 different species of reed frogs, which can vary considerably in color, pattern, and appearance depending on the said species. Care of most of the species, however, is for the most part, similar. Some species display colorful spots, stripes, dashes, flecks, or streaks, while others may be more solid or uniformly colored. They may be numerous combinations of red, orange, yellow, olive to pale green, tan, blues, turquoise, to blackish, brown, or reddish brown. Reed frogs also have some degree of color changing abilities depending on their environmental conditions. Reed frogs earn their common names from their habits of basking and perching on emergent aquatic vegetation, and use their enlarged toe pads for climbing and grasping. Reed frogs are colorful and attractive additions as vivarium pets, but many are still wild-collected. Therefore, these frogs should be selected from a reputable, captive born source whenever possible.

Taxonomy

Life: All living, physical, and animate entities

Domain: Eukaryota

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum/Sub Phylum: Chordata/Vertebrata

Class: Amphibia

Order: Anura

Suborder: Neobatrachia

Family: Hyperoliidae

Genus: *Heterixalus* and *Hyperolius*

Species: *Heterixalus sp.** and *Hyperolius sp.**

**Taxonomy subject to change and revision.*

Lifespan and Longevity

If provided the proper care, reed frogs can attain longevity of 5 to 10 years or more.

Distribution and Habitat

Collectively, reed frogs occur throughout Sub-Saharan Africa and on the island of Madagascar near Africa. *Hyperolius* species, or the African reed frogs occur on the mainland of Sub-Saharan

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Africa, while *Heterixalus* species are found on Madagascar. Different species of reed frogs can occupy different environments, including tropical to sub-tropical forests, lowland forests, freshwater marshes, lakes, and swamplands, to seasonally flooded grasslands, rice paddies, and other areas, savannahs, to higher mountain/altitude forests.

Conservation Status

Conservation status dependent upon the species. Some species are IUCN Least Concern (LC). Some are IUCN Near Threatened (NT), Conservation Dependent (CD), Vulnerable (VU), Endangered (EN), to Critically Endangered (CE). Some Not Evaluated for the IUCN Red List (NE) or otherwise Data Deficient (DD).

Experience Level Required

Intermediate/Moderate to Advanced (depending on species).

Size

Reed frogs are relatively small frogs that typically range in size from less than ½ an inch to about 3 inches as adults.

Housing and Enclosure Plus Temperature, Lighting, and Humidity

Housing must be sealed and escape proof with a secured lid or aquarium hood. Housing for reed frogs should be naturalistic and mimic their natural environment as much as possible. Live plants should be used whenever possible to help maintain oxygen and humidity levels inside the vivarium. Also ensure that any live or potted plants used within an enclosure are free or rinsed of any potentially harmful pesticides or other chemicals. A 10 to 30 gallon planted glass terrarium, front opening glass enclosure, vivarium, or even custom made enclosure with ample hiding and climbing areas should be provided, and can house a group of 5 to 6 frogs. Humidity should be moderate to high, between 60 to 100% depending on the species, but provide minimal ventilation. Maintain most species at a thermal gradient, with basking temperatures of around 90 degrees F, and temperatures elsewhere in the enclosure from 70 to 80 degrees F. Most species of reed frogs are quite tolerant of a variety of conditions, and most healthy frogs can tolerate ranges outside of these conditions. Many commercially available hydrometers can monitor humidity levels inside the enclosure. Reed frog enclosures can be maintained at around room temperature or sometimes with low wattage incandescent bulbs, ceramic or radiant heat emitters, or under tank heating pads in some cases if needed. Covering 80 to 90% of the enclosure or vivarium with a sheet of glass can achieve the desired humidity levels.

Pieces of driftwood, thin bamboo poles, and manzanita wood, as well as live, potted plants can also be provided in an enclosure for perching opportunities. Also provide a “false bottom” constructed of quartz gravel, PVC, or charcoal to enable proper drainage from the vivarium. Substrates that are acceptable should retain humidity well and can include moist paper towels, peat moss, fir bark, soil mixtures, and sphagnum moss. Reed frogs also benefit from misting, and should be misted every 1 to 3 days. Many commercially available automatic and manual homemade misting systems are available for use. A large, shallow water bowl or pan can also be provided as well. Any water that is used should be clean and free of chlorine and other potentially harmful contaminants. Lighting is an important component for reed frogs, and can improve aesthetics. Fluorescent bulbs, LED, or compact fluorescent bulbs on a timer can help mimic a 12 hour light cycle to promote optimal live plant growth by using full spectrum terrarium or aquarium bulbs. 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, reed frogs are almost entirely insectivorous, feeding on live, moving insects, arthropods, and other invertebrates. In captivity, it is recommended that they be provided cultured flightless fruit flies, springtails, isopods, roaches, or feeder crickets of appropriate size. Many of these food items may need supplementation with calcium, vitamin D3, and other multi vitamins, which are commonly available through many commercial and retail outlets. Most reed frogs can be fed anywhere from 3 to 6 insects every other day, but this depends on the age and size of the frog and feeder insects. Growing juvenile frogs should be supplemented more frequently than adults. 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

Reed frogs are small and fragile amphibians, and handling them should thus be reduced or eliminated as much as possible. These frogs are more suited for display, rather than frequent, hand on handling and interaction.

****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

Disclaimer: Note that the information provided in these, or any care sheets, are not intended to be all-exhaustive, and further research and care should always be sought and provided when it comes to any species one may prospectively be interested in. These care sheets are also not intended to serve as substitutes for professional veterinary medical care and husbandry should any animal require it. Always seek proper and professional veterinary care for any animal should the need arise, and be prepared ahead of time for any and all husbandry costs and expenses that may occur with any animal beyond the initial purchase. Any animal owned is ultimately a matter of personal/individual care and responsibility.

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