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FROGS

Green Treefrog

Dryophytes cinereus

Dryophytes cinereus is a slender, light green treefrog of 3-6 cm from the south-eastern USA with a light stripe along each side and horizontal pupils. It is hardy, lives 5-10 years in captivity and is one of the easiest treefrogs to start with. It is nocturnal, and the males call loudly, so the enclosure does not belong in the bedroom.

Family: Hylidae Former name: *Hyla cinerea* **Mild skin toxins**

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**3-6 cm** snout-vent length
Weight	**2.2-5.1 g**
Lifespan	**5-10 years**
Active	**At night**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal**
Habitat	**Wetland and temperate woodland and meadow**
Skin toxins	**Mild** Wash your hands after contact and keep your fingers away from your eyes and mouth
Difficulty	**Beginner**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**45 × 45 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 2 adults
Temperature, day	**24-28 °C**
Temperature, night	**19-24 °C**
Humidity	**50-80%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Optional** Ferguson zone 1
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly, in pairs or in groups**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Development	**Tadpoles in water**
Egg-laying site	**In water**
Sexually mature	**12-24 months**
Eggs per clutch	**275-3,946**
Hatching	**4-14 days**
Larval period	**24-45 days** from hatching to metamorphosis
Larval diet	**Algae/plants and complete diet**
Parental care	**None**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Not listed**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

About the species

Dryophytes cinereus is a slender treefrog with long legs, smooth skin and large eyes with horizontal pupils. Adults measure 3-6 cm from snout to vent and weigh on average just under 4 g (2.2-5.1 g). The females are normally larger than the males.

The back is most often yellow-green to bright green, but there are also reddish-brown and dull olive-green animals, and the frog can change colour a little with mood, temperature and humidity. The back often has small golden spots. The underside is white to cream-coloured, and a white or yellowish stripe runs along each side from the corner of the mouth towards the flank.

The stripe varies in length and can be missing altogether. Together with the horizontal pupils it distinguishes the species from several similar treefrogs in the terrarium hobby.

The species was formerly called *Hyla cinerea* and still appears under that name with many dealers and in older literature. The species name cinereus means ash-grey and alludes to the colour of a preserved specimen. The species is regarded as monotypic, but the appearance changes gradually from Florida northwards along the Atlantic coast.

Skin toxicity: Like most amphibians, the species has a weak skin toxin. It is not dangerous but can irritate mucous membranes, and no difference between wild and captive-bred animals is documented. Wash your hands after contact, and do not touch your eyes and mouth. Consideration for the frog's delicate skin is just as good a reason not to handle it.

The frog is small and easily startled and is an animal to watch rather than touch.

Read more: Humidity, misting and ventilation Read more: Buying animals: captive-bred, wild-caught and transport

Distribution and habitat

Dryophytes cinereus lives in the south-eastern and central USA. The range extends from the Chesapeake Bay area in Delaware, Maryland and Virginia down through the coastal plain of North and South Carolina and Georgia to the whole of Florida and westwards through Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana to the eastern half of Texas and south-eastern Oklahoma. Along the Mississippi River it reaches north through Arkansas, Tennessee and Kentucky to the far south-eastern corner of Missouri and southern Illinois, and in recent decades it has spread a little at the edge of the range.

The species has been introduced to Puerto Rico and a couple of places in Texas and Missouri. The introduced populations are not part of the native range and are not shown on the map.

> **Native range:** United States.

HABITAT

Dryophytes cinereus almost always lives by permanent water with abundant vegetation: swamps, marshes, lakes, ponds, cypress swamps, water-lily meadows, ditches and even fish ponds. It is also found on barrier islands and coastal stretches, where it tolerates brackish water. At night the frogs sit on twigs, low branches, reeds and blades of grass, preferably in open patches where the prey gathers. It is common close to people, in gardens with ponds, in sheds and garages.

During the day the frog sleeps on leaves and branches. It is fairly sedentary and stays close to the water, especially in dry periods, and is most active in humid weather. The males call from March to September, most strongly after rain. In the northern part of the range the species hibernates in rock crevices and other hiding places. Temperature and humidity at the habitats are not documented.

Care

THE ENCLOSURE

A pair of *D. cinereus* needs a terrarium of at least 45 × 45 × 60 cm. A group of 3-6 frogs needs at least 50 × 50 × 80 cm, and bigger is always better. Height matters more than floor area, because the frog climbs. The lid must fit tightly and preferably be wire mesh over about half of the surface, so that ventilation is good.

Furnish with branches of different thicknesses, cork bark, lianas and sturdy plants such as golden pothos and philodendron, so that the frog can choose between different resting places. It sleeps under a leaf during the day, so there must be cover both high up and low down. The substrate can be coconut fibre, sphagnum or a bioactive soil mix; in a quarantine terrarium, kitchen paper is easiest. Remove faeces and uric acid daily.

Outside the breeding season the species lives fairly solitarily, so it can easily be kept alone. Pairs and groups do well in a spacious terrarium when the animals are of similar size. Keep the species as the only species in the terrarium.

Read more: Terrarium construction and bioactive substrate Read more: Quarantine and hygiene

TEMPERATURE

Keep the terrarium at 24-28 °C by day and 19-24 °C at night. In summer the day may reach about 28 °C, and a weak spot bulb over a thick branch provides a warm spot of up to 29 °C so that the frog can choose for itself. The species does not need strong heating, and small terrariums overheat easily, so have one thermometer at the top and one at the bottom.

In winter the terrarium can stand a little cooler, for example at room temperature, and feeding is then more sparing. Below 16 °C the frogs become sluggish and uncoordinated, so do not go lower. A proper winter rest is not necessary.

HUMIDITY AND MISTING

Aim for 50-80 % humidity, and mist the terrarium every day, preferably morning and evening when the light is off. At night the humidity may be high and briefly reach 100 %, while by day, when light and heat are on, it may fall. The most important thing is a daily fluctuation and a terrarium that does not stay wet. A fogger controlled by a hygrostat is a great help.

Good ventilation is important so that the air does not become stagnant. Mist with rainwater or dechlorinated tap water. The males call especially after misting, and in the wild the species breeds after rain.

WATER AND WATER QUALITY

D. cinereus must always have access to clean water. A shallow water dish that the frog can sit in is enough; change the water daily, and scrub the dish with an amphibian-safe product once a week. If you want young or simply a more natural enclosure, the water section can be made large and cover a good part of the floor. Always make sure the frog can easily get out again. An aquarium heater in the water section can help warm the air, but the water should not become warmer than 28 °C.

Use dechlorinated tap water or spring water, not distilled water or reverse-osmosis water, in the dish and for spraying. Never use soap or cleaning products, because amphibians absorb substances through the skin.

LIGHTING AND UVB

The frog needs a fixed daily rhythm with dark nights and enough light for the plants to thrive, for example 12 hours a day or 14 hours in summer and 10 in winter. Fluorescent tubes or LEDs keep the heat down. UVB is not required, and the frog manages without, but a weak UVB source (Ferguson zone 1) with plenty of shade can be a benefit, especially in a planted enclosure. Replace the tube according to the manufacturer's instructions. Glass and plastic block UVB, so a window gives only heat.

Read more: Lighting and UVB

FEEDING

Dryophytes cinereus is an insectivore and needs live food. Adults take crickets, locusts, houseflies, small cockroaches, soldier fly larvae, silkworms and earthworms; mealworms and wax moth larvae are used as a supplement and treats. A feeder insect the length of the frog's head is normally the right size. Juveniles get fruit flies and small crickets.

Juveniles are fed daily. Adults are fed every 2-3 days so that they do not become too fat. Give only as much as the frog eats in about 15 minutes, and remove feeder insects that have not been eaten after a few hours. Dust the food with calcium with D3 2-3 times a week and with multivitamin once a week. Insects caught with a net in the garden or a roadside verge provide good variety.

Read more: Feeder animals: keeping and breeding Read more: Calcium, vitamins and supplements

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

D. cinereus is nocturnal and really gets going when the lights go out. It sits on leaves and branches and clings to vertical surfaces with the adhesive discs on its toes. Outside the breeding season it is fairly solitary, and in the wild the males defend their calling site with threat calls and occasional wrestling matches.

The males call loudly for most of the year, especially after spraying, and a chorus can be heard far away, so place the enclosure where the sound does not disturb. The frog is easily startled and should be handled only when necessary, and only by adults. Use clean, wet hands without soap or cream or moist, powder-free gloves, or move the frog with a glass. Wash your hands afterwards.

Breeding

SEXUAL MATURITY AND SEXING

Females are normally larger than males, and males give themselves away by calling. The species becomes sexually mature during the first or second year of life, at 12-24 months. Juveniles cannot be sexed, so buy a small group if you want both sexes, and choose captive-bred animals, as wild-caught ones often carry parasites.

MATING

In the wild the species breeds from March to September, and the breeding season is governed by day length, temperature and rain. In the enclosure, frequent spraying in spring sets off the males' calling and the mating; an artificial rainy season works in the same way. The male grasps the female, and the eggs are fertilised outside the body. The males readily mate with several females.

EGGS AND TADPOLES

The female lays the eggs in the water section in small, loose clumps among floating or emergent plants, for example duckweed. The number varies greatly from population to population: from about 275 to almost 4,000 eggs per clutch, with an average of 400-2,150. A female can lay several times during a long breeding season. There is no parental care.

Move eggs or tadpoles to a separate tub, where food and water quality are easy to control. The tadpoles feed on algae and can be fed fish food, algae tablets, spirulina and mosquito larvae. Keep the water above 20 °C, because colder water is fatal to the developing eggs and tadpoles. Change the water often, and spread them over several tubs if they become numerous.

Read more: Rearing tadpoles

METAMORPHOSIS

The eggs hatch after 4-14 days, most often after about 5 days. The tadpoles are 5 mm at hatching and metamorphose after 24-45 days.

When the front legs appear, the tadpole must be able to get out of the water easily. Lower the water level, and add sloping stones, cork or floating plants so that it can climb out and not drown.

REARING THE YOUNG

The newly metamorphosed juveniles measure about 21 mm and need fruit flies and tiny crickets, dusted with calcium, every day. Keep them in a moist rearing enclosure with plants and a shallow water dish. Sort the juveniles by size, and give larger food as they grow. How quickly they reach adult size is not documented.

Health and common mistakes

D. cinereus is hardy, but these problems recur:

- Wild-caught animals: the species is often imported in large numbers from the wild, and those animals often carry parasites and diseases and can be difficult to acclimatise. Buy captive-bred animals, or quarantine wild-caught ones.
- Skin infections: reddish or bluish discolouration and white, cottony or fungal-looking areas, especially on the lower belly, around the vent and on the inside of the hind legs, are often caused by bacteria and fungi in an injury. Look at the frog from below through a clear plastic tub.
- Obesity, if it is fed too much and too often.
- Lethargy, refusal to eat, bloating or changed calls can be due to stress or poor conditions.

A healthy frog sits mostly in the upper part of the enclosure, hidden under a leaf during the day, and has an elongated, muscular body without being thin. A sick frog often sits on the bottom and looks thin. Isolate sick animals, and seek a vet with amphibian expertise. Never release frogs or tadpoles into the wild, as they can transmit diseases to native amphibians.

Always ask someone who knows

This guide is a good place to start, but it cannot replace experience. Animals differ, and much of what matters most is learned from people who have kept the species for years. Talk to a breeder, an experienced keeper or a vet who knows reptiles and amphibians before you get the animal - and again if anything looks wrong.