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FROGS

Dainty Green Tree Frog

Ranoidea gracilenta

Ranoidea gracilenta is a slender, pale green tree frog of 3-5 cm from Australia's east coast, with yellow sides, orange eyes and a thin pale line from nostril to eye. It is active at night, lives in vegetation by water and is adaptable, but very little documented knowledge exists on its care in captivity.

Family: Pelodryadidae Former name: *Litoria gracilenta; Chlorohyla gracilenta; Hyla gracilenta*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**3-5 cm** snout-vent length
Lifespan	**5-10 years**
Active	**At night**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal**
Habitat	**Rainforest and wetland**
Skin toxins	**None known**
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**45 × 30 × 60 cm** L × W × H for 4 adults
Temperature, day	**22-27 °C**
Temperature, night	**16-20 °C**
Humidity	**70-90%**
Water	**Water dish** depth 3-5 cm
UVB	**Optional** Ferguson zone 1
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**In pairs or in groups**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Development	**Tadpoles in water**
Egg-laying site	**In water**
Eggs per clutch	**100-500**
Larval period	**60-100 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

Ranoidea gracilenta is a slender and relatively small tree frog. Adults measure 3-5 cm from snout to vent. The back is lime to olive green and has coarse, granular skin. The sides and belly are strongly yellow, the hands and feet yellow, and on the backs of the thighs the skin is purple or reddish brown. The eye is orange, the pupil horizontal, and a thin, pale green to yellow line runs from the nostril past the eye and follows its upper edge. Some animals have a light blue ring around the eye. The fingers are webbed to three quarters and the toes all the way, and all have large adhesive discs. Males have a vocal sac.

The species can be confused with *Ranoidea chloris* and *Ranoidea xanthomera*, which live in the same area. These two lack the pale line by the eye, *R. chloris* has red eyes, and both are larger and have smoother skin than *R. gracilenta*. The species was described in 1869 as *Hyla gracilenta* and appears in older literature and in the hobby as *Litoria gracilenta*; more recent works place it in the genus *Chlorohyla*.

Skin toxicity: The skin secretion has not been studied in the species, and there is no known toxic effect. Wash your hands before and after contact all the same, and do not touch your eyes and mouth afterwards.

Lifespan is not documented; 5-10 years is a cautious estimate based on the larger, related species.

Distribution and habitat

Ranoidea gracilenta lives along Australia's east coast from the area around Cooktown in Queensland south to about Gosford in New South Wales. There is also a small, probably introduced population in Sydney. The species is also found in southern New Guinea, especially in Western Province in Papua New Guinea, but the range there is poorly known.

The species is common in coastal areas and is assessed as least concern. It often ends up outside its range, because it rests unnoticed in transported banana bunches and arrives with fruit and vegetables at markets far from the coast. Frogs moved around in this way can spread diseases.

> **Native range:** Australia and Papua New Guinea.

HABITAT

Ranoidea gracilenta is found in rainforest, dry and wet sclerophyll forest, open woodland and in gardens and on orchards. It sits in plants that rise above the water along watercourses, swamps and ponds, often temporary ones. It readily enters houses when looking for insects and is common on banana plantations.

The frog is most active at night and after heavy rain in spring and summer. The males call from the vegetation by the water, especially in summer and after rain. The call is a long, growling "waa" or "wee", and the males call in noisy choruses. The eggs are laid in clumps near the water surface in temporary water, flooded meadows and ponds, where the tadpoles grow up. The coastal climate is subtropical to tropical with warm, humid summers and milder, drier winters.

Read more: Rearing tadpoles

Care

THE ENCLOSURE

Little documented knowledge exists on the care of *Ranoidea gracilenta* in captivity. The figures here are built on the climate of the range and on the closely related, larger Australian tree frogs, especially *Ranoidea caerulea*, and should be adjusted according to the animals' behaviour.

A pair or a small group of 3-4 animals can be kept in a terrarium of 45 × 30 × 60 cm. Height matters more than floor area, because the frog climbs and sits high in the planting. The lid must close tightly, because the frog climbs and jumps well, but it must have ample ventilation. Keep only animals of the same size together.

Plant densely with plants with smooth, non-toxic leaves, for example *Philodendron*, *Pothos*, bromeliads and *Monstera*, and add branches and cork bark as perches. The substrate can be coconut fibre, moist moss or a layer of fine soil. Avoid pebbles and gravel, which the frog can swallow.

TEMPERATURE

Keep the terrarium at 22-27 °C by day and 16-20 °C at night. The slightly cooler night corresponds to the coastal climate. A heat mat on the side of the terrarium, controlled by a thermostat, is enough. Do not use hot rocks, and do not let the frog sit directly on a heat source. If the terrarium has a weak heat bulb, it must be well ventilated, and there must always be a cooler zone. Place one thermometer high and one low, because heat collects at the top.

The figures are based on the climate and on related tree frogs. A cool rest period is not necessary, but a slightly cooler and drier period in winter suits the seasons in the wild.

Read more: Heat and temperature

HUMIDITY AND MISTING

Keep humidity at 70-90 %. Mist the terrarium once a day, preferably in the evening when the frog wakes, so that plants and walls are dewy. Let the substrate dry out slightly between mistings, and make sure the air does not stand still: stagnant, wet air is a cause of respiratory problems, so good ventilation is just as important as misting. Use rainwater or dechlorinated tap water.

Read more: Humidity, misting and ventilation

WATER AND WATER QUALITY

Give *Ranoidea gracilenta* a large, shallow water dish with 3-5 cm of water, which the frog can easily climb out of, for example via a branch or a stone. The frog likes to sit in the water and absorbs it through the skin. Use rainwater or tap water that has been dechlorinated or has stood for a couple of days. Do not use distilled water in the dish. Change the water often, and wash the dish with hot water without soap or cleaning products, because amphibians absorb substances through the skin.

LIGHTING AND UVB

The frog needs no light other than what the plants require. Fluorescent tubes are better than incandescent bulbs, because they give less heat. Keep the light on 12 hours a day, with dark nights. UVB is optional; if used, the source should be weak (Ferguson zone 1) with plenty of shade, and the tube replaced every six months.

Read more: Lighting and UVB

FEEDING

Adult *Ranoidea gracilenta* eat small crickets, blowflies, houseflies, fruit flies, moths, small cockroaches and other soft insects of a suitable size. The feeder animal must not be larger than the distance between the frog's eyes. Small mealworms and waxworms are given sparingly. Juveniles take fruit flies, springtails and the smallest crickets.

Adults are fed 2-3 times a week, juveniles daily. Give only what the frog eats in 10-15 minutes, and remove the remains. Dust the food with calcium and vitamin powder, and feed the feeder animals greens and grain beforehand. The frog hunts movement and only takes live food. A thick fat fold by the eardrum is a sign of too much food.

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

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Ranoidea gracilenta is nocturnal and rests by day in the plants with its legs drawn in. It is fast and jumps well, so the terrarium must always be opened carefully. The frog is not shy, but does not tolerate being handled much.

The males call loudly at night, especially after misting or a humid period, so the terrarium does not belong in a bedroom. If the frog must be moved, use moist hands free of soap and cream residue or a clean plastic bag as a glove. Wash your hands afterwards.

Breeding

SEXUAL MATURITY AND SEXING

Males have a vocal sac and call. The difference in size between the sexes is not documented, and neither are age and size at sexual maturity. Young animals cannot be sexed, so a small group of 4-5 animals gives the best chance of both sexes.

MATING

In the wild the species breeds after heavy rain in spring and summer. In the terrarium the seasons are imitated with a cool, drier period in winter, followed by heavy misting or a rain chamber where the temperature rises slightly. The male clasps the female behind the forelegs, and she lays the eggs while he fertilises them. How many times a year the species breeds in captivity is not documented.

EGGS AND TADPOLES

The eggs are laid as clumps in clear jelly near the water surface and are attached to plants in the water. The number per laying is not documented; 100-500 eggs is an estimate based on size and related species. The tadpoles are dark brown with a yellowish tinge and grow to about 5 cm. They are raised in a clean tub with plants, and the water is changed often. Feed with algae and dry food for aquarium fish, and spread them over several tubs if there are many. Remove the adult frogs, or move the eggs to a separate tub.

METAMORPHOSIS

The hatching time is not documented. The tadpoles take at least two months to develop and often about 14 weeks before they metamorphose into frogs. When the forelegs appear, the tadpole must be able to climb out of the water easily: lower the water level, and add sloping stones, cork or floating plants, so that it can crawl out and not drown.

REARING THE YOUNG

The newly metamorphosed froglets are very small and should be fed daily with fruit flies and springtails, dusted with calcium, until they can take larger food. Keep them in a humid rearing terrarium with plants and a shallow water dish, and sort by size, so that the largest do not eat the smallest. How quickly the young grow to adult size is not documented.

Health and common mistakes

There is no species-specific knowledge of diseases in *Ranoidea gracilenta*. The problems that recur in related Australian tree frogs are:

- Skin infections: reddish discolouration and white, cottony or fungal areas are caused by bacteria and fungi and need rapid treatment by a vet with knowledge of amphibians.
- Respiratory problems from stagnant, wet air: ensure good ventilation.
- Cramps or tremors in the legs are a warning sign, often associated with calcium and vitamin deficiency.
- Overweight: too much food causes fat folds over the eyes and eardrum and shortens life.
- Chytrid fungus (*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*) is found in wild Australian frog populations. Never release frogs or tadpoles into the wild.

A healthy frog sits high in the planting, is sturdy and has a big appetite. A sick frog more often sits on the substrate and looks thin. Isolate the animal if it is not thriving.

Read more: Quarantine and hygiene

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.