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FROGS

Magnificent Tree Frog

Ranoidea splendida

Ranoidea splendida is a large, sturdy tree frog of 10-11 cm from the Kimberley in north-western Australia. It is green with clearly yellow undersides to the legs and feet and often small pale spots on the back, and older animals develop huge glandular swellings above the head. It is nocturnal, calm and hardy in captivity, but easily becomes overweight.

Family: Pelodryadidae Former name: *Litoria splendida; Pelodryas splendida* **Mild skin toxins**

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**10-11 cm** snout-vent length
Lifespan	**7-20 years**
Active	**At night**
Lifestyle	**Arboreal**
Habitat	**Savanna and rocky terrain**
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**
Basking spot	**28-30 °C**
Temperature, night	**19-23 °C**
Humidity	**70-90%**
Water	**Water section** depth 2-10 cm
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**
Eggs per clutch	**150-2,000**
Clutches per year	**3-4**
Hatching	**1-3 days**
Larval period	**30-60 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 splendida is one of Australia's largest tree frogs. Males reach about 10 cm and females about 11 cm from snout to vent. The body is broad and sturdy, and the fingers and toes have large, round adhesive discs.

The back is olive green to pale green, and the belly is white. The undersides of the feet and legs are clearly yellow, and most animals have small white or sulphur-yellow spots on the back, dense in some and sparse in others. The most characteristic feature is the parotoid glands, the large glandular swellings behind the eyes: in older animals they cover the whole crown of

the head and hang down over the eardrum, so that the eardrum, which is otherwise almost as large as the eye, is partly hidden. In *Ranoidea caerulea*, which the species closely resembles, the glands are markedly smaller. Young animals do not yet have the large glands and are therefore harder to tell apart from it.

In 2024 the first animal with blue skin was found in the wild. The colour is caused by a mutation that removes the yellow pigment (axanthism), leaving only the blue.

The species was described in 1977 and was formerly placed in the genus *Litoria*. It is therefore also known as *Litoria splendida* and, in more recent literature, as *Pelodryas splendida*. The species name splendida means splendid or magnificent.

Skin toxicity: The large glands secrete a skin secretion, but a toxic effect on humans is not documented. The secretion should be treated as biologically active, as in *Ranoidea caerulea*: wash your hands after contact, and do not touch your eyes or mouth beforehand.

Distribution and habitat

Ranoidea splendida has a limited range in north-western Australia. It lives in the Kimberley region of northern Western Australia and extends east into the north-western Northern Territory. The species is not known outside Australia.

Australia does not permit the export of wild animals, so all animals outside the country come from captive breeding.

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

> **Native range:** Australia.

HABITAT

Ranoidea splendida lives in forest and open woodland in the rocky landscape of the Kimberley. The climate is monsoonal: a hot and very wet rainy season in the southern hemisphere's summer and a long, dry and warm dry season for the rest of the year.

The species is nocturnal. By day it hides in caves and rock crevices, where the air is cooler and more humid. It survives the dry season in the same places. At night it sits on branches and rocks and in the vegetation near water and hunts.

The frog thrives around buildings and often sits in toilet blocks, showers and water tanks, which provide damp, shady hiding places. The breeding season is probably in the rainy season. The male's call is a deep, repeated "crawk-crawk-crawk", very similar to the call of *Ranoidea caerulea*. Breeding behaviour in the wild is little known.

Care

THE ENCLOSURE

There is relatively little knowledge about keeping *Ranoidea splendida* in captivity. The care described here is based on what is known about the species and on the close relative *Ranoidea caerulea*, which has the same size and way of life. The figures for the terrarium are borrowed from *R. caerulea*.

A pair needs a terrarium of at least 45 × 45 × 60 cm. A group of 3-4 animals needs at least 60 × 45 × 60 cm. Height matters more than floor area, because the frog climbs. The terrarium must be fully enclosed with a tight-fitting lid, but have good ventilation, as the frog finds every gap.

Plant it with sturdy, smooth-leaved, non-toxic plants such as *Monstera*, *Philodendron*, *Epipremnum* and bromeliads, as the frogs are heavy and rough on plants. Branches, cork bark and flat stones provide perches and hiding places. The substrate can be coconut fibre or fine soil, which does no harm if the frog accidentally swallows a little. Avoid gravel and small stones. The plants can be left in their pots, hidden between bark and stones, so they are easy to replace.

Provide a couple of dark, cool hides, as the frog rests by day. Keep only animals of the same size together, because large animals eat smaller ones.

TEMPERATURE

Keep the terrarium at 24-28 °C by day and 19-23 °C at night. There should be a slightly warmer spot at the top, up to 30 °C, and cooler spots lower down, so that the frog can choose for itself. Heat it with a thermostat-controlled heat mat on the side of the terrarium or a weak heat lamp in a well-ventilated terrarium. Keep the heat source out of the frog's reach, so that the

animal cannot sit directly on it.

Place one thermometer at the top and one at the bottom, because the heat collects high up. The temperature must not exceed 30 °C. Overheating dries the frog out and stresses it. There is no need for a winter rest, but a cooler and drier period of 5-6 weeks is used to trigger breeding (see Mating).

Read more: Heat and temperature

HUMIDITY AND MISTING

Humidity must be high, 70-90 %, with a slight drop during the daytime. Mist the terrarium every day or every other day, preferably in the evening when the frog wakes up. A permanent water area helps hold the humidity, and then misting can be less frequent. Let the substrate dry out a little between mistings, so that it does not become muddy.

Mist with rainwater or tap water that has been dechlorinated or has stood for a couple of days. Good ventilation is just as important as humidity, because still, damp air causes respiratory problems and skin infections. The humidity is not documented for the species; the figure is based on *Ranoidea caerulea*.

Read more: Humidity, misting and ventilation

WATER AND WATER QUALITY

Ranoidea splendida must always have access to clean water. A permanent water area of 2-10 cm, sealed off from the rest of the floor with glass and silicone, is best, and a biological filter as in an aquarium keeps the water clean. A large, shallow and easily removable bowl can be used instead.

The water must be easy to climb out of, for example via branches or large stones. The frog likes to sit in the water and absorbs it through its skin. Use rainwater or tap water that has been treated against chlorine or has stood for a couple of days. Do not use distilled water in the water bowl. Change the water often, because the frog eats a lot and fouls the water accordingly. Never use soap or cleaning products in the terrarium, as amphibians absorb substances through the skin.

LIGHTING AND UVB

The frog is nocturnal and does not need strong light. A fluorescent tube in the terrarium mainly serves the plants, and tubes are better than incandescent bulbs, which heat and dry the air. Keep the light on for 12-14 hours a day with dark nights.

UVB is optional. If it is used, the source must be weak (Ferguson zone 1), and there must be plenty of shade so that the frog can move away. Replace the UVB tube every six months. The requirement has not been studied for the species and is borrowed from *Ranoidea caerulea*.

Read more: Lighting and UVB

FEEDING

Ranoidea splendida eats live crickets, flies, moths, earthworms and other insects that it can fit in its mouth. It takes only prey that moves. Mealworms, giant mealworms and wax moth larvae are treats, given in small amounts; choose mealworms that have just moulted. Pinkie mice are not necessary and make the frog fat.

Adults are fed twice a week. Young animals are fed daily or every other day. Give only as much as the frog eats in 10-15 minutes. Dust the food with calcium and vitamin powder, and feed the feeder insects greens and grain beforehand.

The species easily becomes overweight. If the skin fold over the eardrum hangs more than halfway down, the frog is being fed too much. If it is not visible at all, the frog is too thin. Juveniles of 10-35 mm take fruit flies, small crickets and houseflies.

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

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

Ranoidea splendida is calm and settles into captivity quickly. Most animals become tame when they are seen daily, but the species is nocturnal, so it often sits hidden by day. It is not social outside the breeding season and can be kept alone, in pairs or in groups of animals of similar size. Males call loudly with a deep, repeated "crawk", especially when the humidity rises, so the terrarium does not belong in a bedroom.

Avoid unnecessary handling. The skin is delicate, and stress increases the risk of disease. Hands must be rinsed free of soap and cream and be wet before the frog is touched; a clean plastic bag can also be used as a glove. Wash your hands afterwards.

Breeding

SEXUAL MATURITY AND SEXING

The sexes are told apart by the throat: the male has a wrinkled vocal sac and may have dark nuptial pads at the base of the thumb, while the female's throat is white and the skin tighter. Males reach about 10 cm and females about 11 cm, but size alone is not a reliable indicator. Young animals cannot be sexed, so a small group of 4-5 animals gives the best chance of both sexes. When the species reaches sexual maturity is not documented. The characteristics are borrowed from *Ranoidea caerulea*.

MATING

In the wild *Ranoidea splendida* probably breeds in the rainy season. In captivity breeding is triggered by stopping the misting for 5-6 weeks and lowering the temperature to about 22 °C, with 10 cm of water and 10 hours of light. The animals then gradually return to normal conditions, and the terrarium is misted heavily, so that it resembles the start of the rainy season. A rain chamber can also be used. The male grasps the female behind the forelimbs and fertilises the eggs as she lays them. A pair can lay 3-4 clutches a year.

EGGS AND TADPOLES

The female lays the eggs in still water, surrounded by clear jelly. The number per laying is not documented for the species; in *Ranoidea caerulea* it is 150-2000 eggs, and the figure in the box is borrowed from there. There is no parental care, so remove the adults or move the eggs to a separate container.

The tadpoles feed on algae and, in captivity, on dry food for aquarium fish. Feed daily, change the water often, and divide them among several containers if there are many.

Read more: Rearing tadpoles

METAMORPHOSIS

The eggs hatch after 1-3 days, and the tadpoles are fully developed after about one to two months. The figures are borrowed from *Ranoidea caerulea*; for the species itself they are not documented. Some tadpoles can stay in the water much longer, up to a year.

When the forelimbs 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 froglets are very small and must be fed daily with fruit flies and tiny crickets, dusted with calcium, until they can take larger food. Keep them in a humid rearing terrarium with plants and a shallow water bowl. Sort the froglets by size, because larger animals eat smaller ones. How quickly the young grow to adult size is not documented for the species.

Health and common mistakes

Ranoidea splendida is hardy, but the same problems recur in large tree frogs:

- Obesity: too much food causes fat folds over the eyes and eardrum and shortens life. Feed sparingly, and watch the fold over the eardrum.
- Skin infections: red or bluish discolouration and white, cottony areas, especially on the belly and the inside of the hind legs, are caused by bacteria and fungi and require prompt treatment.
- Respiratory problems from poor ventilation.
- Cramps or tremors in the legs are a warning sign, often associated with calcium and vitamin deficiency.
- Chytrid fungus (*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*) is a deadly disease in amphibians. Never release frogs or tadpoles into the wild, and do not move them between locations.

A healthy frog is sturdy and muscular and has a big appetite. A sick frog sits on the floor more often and looks slim. See a vet with expertise in amphibians, and 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.