herpy

RANAS

Yellow Mantella

Mantella crocea

Mantella crocea is a small, diurnal frog of 18-24 mm from the forests of east-central Madagascar, yellow, khaki-brown, bronze or green with a chocolate-brown face mask. The species has a very small range and is vulnerable in the wild. It must be kept cool and breeds readily in captivity when the seasons are imitated.

Familia: Mantellidae

DATOS CLAVE

EL ANIMAL

Tamaño adulto	**18-24 mm** longitud hocico-cloaca
Esperanza de vida	**4-8 años**
Activo	**De día**
Modo de vida	**Terrestre**
Hábitat	**Selva tropical y humedal**
Toxinas cutáneas en la naturaleza	**Leves**
Toxinas cutáneas en cautividad	**Ninguna** Animales criados en cautividad. Los animales capturados en la naturaleza pueden conservar sus toxinas durante mucho tiempo
Dificultad	**Intermedio**

CUIDADOS

Terrario mín.	**45 × 45 × 30 cm** L × An × Al para 4 adultos
Temperatura, día	**20-24 °C**
Temperatura, noche	**16-18 °C**
Humedad	**70-100 %**
Agua	**Bebedero**
UVB	**Opcional** Zona Ferguson 1
Alimentación	**Pequeños invertebrados (colémbolos, moscas de la fruta)**
Se mantiene	**En grupo**

CRÍA

Reproducción	**Ovípara**
Desarrollo	**Renacuajos en el agua**
Lugar de puesta	**En el suelo**
Madurez sexual	**12-18 meses**
Huevos por puesta	**12-30**
Eclosión	**3-12 días**
Periodo larvario	**56-100 días** desde la eclosión hasta la metamorfosis
Alimentación de las larvas	**Algas/plantas y alimento completo**
Cuidado parental	**Ninguno**

PROTECCIÓN Y TRÁMITES

CITES	**Apéndice II**
UICN	**Vulnerable (VU)**

Sobre la especie

Mantella crocea is a small, compact frog that varies in colour. Most animals in captivity are yellow, khaki-brown or bronze, while animals from, among other places, Ambohitantely and Zahamena are green. The colour is broken by a black to chocolate-brown mask that runs around the face and down the sides, and often by brown spots on the back and limbs. The back may have a faint X-shaped or diamond-shaped pattern, and the hind legs have red spots. The females reach up to 24 mm from snout to vent, while the males can be sexually mature at about 18 mm. The species was described in 1990 by Pintak and Böhme.

M. crocea is genetically very close to *Mantella milotympanum*, and the two may be one species. It belongs to the family Mantellidae, which is found only in Madagascar.

Like other species in the genus, *M. crocea* has alkaloids in the skin as a defence against predators. The substances come from the diet in the wild, and in captivity the frogs of the genus lose the poison over time. Wild-caught animals may therefore have a mild skin poison, while captive-bred animals are regarded as non-poisonous. Avoid contact, and always wash hands after handling.

Distribución y hábitat

Mantella crocea lives only in Madagascar, in a few forests by swampy areas in the east-central part of the island, among other places in Zahamena, and in a small patch of forest at Ambohitantely in the highlands north-west of Antananarivo. The range lies close to *Mantella aurantiaca* and *Mantella milotympanum* and is very small.

The species is listed as Vulnerable (VU) on the IUCN Red List. It is threatened by habitat loss, and collection for the pet trade may also be a threat.

> **Área de distribución natural:** Madagascar.

HÁBITAT

Mantella crocea lives in humid tropical forest bordering swamps. The genus is most active in the rainy season from December to February, when the males call and defend territories, and the females eat ants, mites and other small arthropods. The eggs are laid on land in damp hollows, and the rain washes the tadpoles into nearby pools. In the cool dry season the frogs are less active and live hidden in the leaf litter.

Cuidados

EL TERRARIO

Mantella crocea is easy to keep, as long as it is kept cool. Enclosure size, humidity, clutch and lifespan are borrowed from the closely related *Mantella aurantiaca*, which lives in the same part of Madagascar and has the same requirements for cool conditions and humidity.

Four adults need an enclosure of at least 45 × 45 × 30 cm, and more animals require more floor area. The species lives on the ground, so floor area is more important than height. The males are territorial, so a large enclosure with many visual barriers is better than a small one.

Build up the base with a drainage layer of expanded clay pebbles, a piece of mesh and on top damp sphagnum or a soil mix with coconut fibre. Spread leaf litter over the substrate, and provide many hides such as cork bark, roots and coconut shell caves. A simpler setup with damp kitchen paper makes it easier to keep an eye on the animals, but the substrate must then be changed often. A mesh lid gives good ventilation.

TEMPERATURA

During the day the temperature should be 20-24 °C and at night 16-18 °C. The species is particularly sensitive to heat: wild-caught animals must not be allowed above 25 °C for any length of time. Captive-bred animals tolerate more and cope with brief periods of up to 28 °C, but they do best in the same cool range. Extra heat is seldom necessary in a living room. Place the enclosure somewhere cool and out of direct sun, and measure the temperature down at the base.

For breeding, a cool dry period is provided in winter with temperatures below 22 °C (see Mating).

HUMEDAD Y PULVERIZACIÓN

Humidity should be 70-100 %. Mist the enclosure daily, and let the surface dry out a little between mistings so the air does not become stagnant. Use reverse osmosis water, rainwater or tap water treated against chlorine, chloramine and heavy metals. During the dry period mist only every fifth to seventh day.

AGUA Y CALIDAD DEL AGUA

There should always be a shallow water bowl in the enclosure. The species of the genus are poor swimmers, so the water must be so shallow that the frogs can easily get out. An exact depth is not documented. Use the same type of water as for misting, change the water often, and scrub the bowl with hot water without soap. Amphibians absorb substances through the skin, so

soap and hand cream must be kept well away.

ILUMINACIÓN Y UVB

The light is primarily for the plants. A UVB requirement is not documented for the species, but a weak UVB tube in Ferguson zone 1 with shade in the rest of the enclosure is an option. Provide 10-12 hours of light a day and about 10 hours in the cool period.

Leer más: Luz y UVB

ALIMENTACIÓN

Mantella crocea is an insectivore that feeds on ants, mites and other small arthropods. It takes relatively large prey for such a small frog, for example crickets as long as its head is wide. Week-old crickets and wingless fruit flies (*Drosophila melanogaster*) can make up most of the diet, supplemented with springtails, termites, small cockroach nymphs, small spiders, lesser mealworm larvae and small waxworms. Use several kinds of feeder insects to avoid deficiencies. Dust the food with a vitamin and mineral supplement.

Feed the adults every other day, and in the cool period a small portion once or twice a week is enough. Feed in several places in the enclosure so that weak animals are not kept away from the food.

COMPORTAMIENTO Y MANIPULACIÓN

Mantella crocea is diurnal and thrives in groups. The males are bold, often sit out in the open and call with short clicks to defend their territory, while the females are shyer and hide under bark or in the leaves. The females do not call, so a call means the animal is a male.

Avoid handling the frogs: the skin is thin and is damaged by grease, soap and the warmth of the hands. If a frog has to be moved, coax it into a clean plastic tub, and wash your hands before and after.

Cría

MADUREZ SEXUAL Y SEXADO

The females are larger and more heavily built than the males. The males are slimmer and are the only ones that call. Age at sexual maturity is not documented for the species; 12-18 months is borrowed from *Mantella madagascariensis*. The easiest way to get a pair is to buy a group of juveniles and let them grow up together.

APAREAMIENTO

Mantella crocea breeds readily in captivity when the two seasons of Madagascar are imitated and the animals are fed heavily in the artificial rainy season. From December to March the enclosure is kept cool and dry with temperatures seldom above 22 °C, misting every fifth to seventh day and only a little food. When spring approaches and the temperature rises, return to daily misting and plentiful, varied food. The males then begin to call, and the females swell with eggs.

A group with more males than females gives the best results in the genus; starting with six to eight males and three females is a good point of departure, but pairs and trios can also succeed. Keep the animals under observation in the cool period.

HUEVOS Y RENACUAJOS

The eggs are laid on land in dark crevices or hollows, for example under a piece of cork bark above a clump of damp moss. Clutch size is not documented for the species; 12-30 eggs is borrowed from *M. aurantiaca*, and the genus lays from a few dozen to over 100 eggs. There is no parental care. After a few days fertilised eggs look as if they are splitting in the middle, while unfertilised ones become discoloured and misshapen.

The eggs are carefully dug up and placed in a closed container with a couple of millimetres of water at the bottom. When the tadpoles hatch over the following week, the water level is raised gradually. They are reared in an aquarium with water at 18-20 °C and fed daily with fish flakes, algae tablets, shrimp pellets, daphnia and powdered spirulina and chlorella. Leftovers are siphoned off the next day.

METAMORFOSIS

The tadpoles hatch after 3-12 days; the figure is borrowed from *Mantella madagascariensis*. At a water temperature of 20 °C the first tadpoles metamorphose after about two months, and the rest follow over the next four to six weeks. When the front legs appear, they are moved to a container with a little water and Java moss so that they do not drown. When the tail is almost gone, the little frogs are moved to a simple setup with kitchen paper or sphagnum.

CRIANZA DE LOS JUVENILES

The newly metamorphosed juveniles are under 12 mm and have a large appetite. The first food is springtails, wingless fruit flies and crickets 1-2 days old. The juveniles are dull in colour and acquire the adult coloration over the following year. They are kept apart from the adults so that they do not compete for the food.

Salud y errores frecuentes

Mantella crocea is sensitive to wrong conditions, and problems arise quickly. Typical mistakes are:

- Heat above 25 °C for any length of time, which weakens the animals quickly. Keep the enclosure cool.
- Drying out from too little misting or dry air without access to water.
- Deficiency diseases from a monotonous diet or too little supplement.
- Parasites, especially in wild-caught animals. Quarantine new animals.
- Emaciation during the cool period. Move an animal that loses a great deal of weight to an enclosure of its own.

See a vet with amphibian expertise if an animal is lethargic and emaciated, develops sores on the skin, or several animals become ill at the same time.

Pregunta siempre a quien sepa

Esta guía es un buen punto de partida, pero no puede sustituir a la experiencia. Cada animal es distinto, y gran parte de lo más importante se aprende de personas que llevan años criando la especie. Habla con un criador, un aficionado con experiencia o un veterinario que conozca los reptiles y anfibios antes de hacerte con el animal, y otra vez si algo no parece normal.