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POISON DART FROGS

Golfodulcean Poison Frog

Phyllobates vittatus

Phyllobates vittatus is a black poison frog with two bright orange or yellow stripes down the back and blue marbled legs. It occurs only in the lowland forest around the Golfo Dulce in south-western Costa Rica. In the terrarium it is diurnal, vocal and a prolific breeder, and the male carries the tadpoles to water himself.

Family: Dendrobatidae Published 15 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**3-4 cm** snout-vent length
Lifespan	**10-20 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Rainforest**
Skin toxins in the wild	**Mild**
Skin toxins in captivity	**None** Captive-bred animals. Wild-caught animals can keep their toxins for a long time
Difficulty	**Intermediate**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**60 × 45 × 45 cm** L × W × H for 4 adults
Temperature, day	**21-25 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-21 °C**
Humidity	**70-100%**
Water	**Water dish** depth 1-2 cm
UVB	**Optional** Ferguson zone 1
Diet	**Insects and small invertebrates (springtails, fruit flies)**
Kept	**In pairs or in groups**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Development	**Tadpoles carried to water**
Egg-laying site	**On the ground**
Sexually mature	**8-10 months**
Eggs per clutch	**7-21**
Larval period	**45-80 days** from hatching to metamorphosis
Larval diet	**Complete diet**
Parental care	**Guards the eggs and carries the tadpoles**

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
IUCN	**Vulnerable (VU)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE
An enclosure of about 60 × 45 × 45 cm suits 2-4 *Phyllobates vittatus*, and as a rule of thumb you should allow about 20-40 litres per adult frog.

TEMPERATURE
Keep *Phyllobates vittatus* between 16 and 27 °C, ideally around 21-24 °C. A daytime temperature of 21-25 °C with a drop to 18-21 °C at night suits most living rooms.

HUMIDITY AND MISTING
Humidity should be 70-100 %. The species tolerates down to 50 % for short periods if it has access to water, but low humidity without water can quickly become fatal.

WATER AND WATER QUALITY
Provide a shallow water dish or a small water feature with 1-2 cm of water and a stone or a piece of bark so the animals can climb out easily. The frogs moisten themselves in the water, and the male may use it to deposit tadpoles.

LIGHTING AND UVB
The lighting is for the plants. LED bars or fluorescent tubes on a timer for 10-12 hours a day are enough, and the night must be dark. Provide shade, and never place the enclosure in direct sun.

FEEDING
Phyllobates vittatus is unusual in that adults take larger prey than most poison frogs.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING
Phyllobates vittatus is diurnal, and the males have a high, trilling call. The species can be kept in pairs or groups.

NATIVE RANGE
Costa Rica.