



African Bullfrogs

Pyxicephalus adspersus

INTERMEDIATE • 5–10 IN ADULT • 15–30 YR LIFESPAN • SOLO ONLY • SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The second largest frog on earth, and one of the few amphibians with a personality you can read across the room. African bullfrogs are squat, wide-mouthed ambush predators that spend the dry season buried and the wet season eating whatever fits. They're hardy and long-lived. They're also territorial, cannibalistic, and armed with a real bite. Keep one for the animal it is: a display frog, not a handling frog.

AT A GLANCE

Ambient temp	78–85 °F
Warm spot	85–88 °F
Night temp	72–76 °F
Humidity	50–70%
UVB	Beneficial, not required
Diet	Insects, mice, fish, other frogs
Feeding cadence	Every 3–5 days
Adult size	5–10 inches
Lifespan	15–30 years



Captive-bred African bullfrogs, sold as pixie frogs, fill amphibian tables at NARBC shows. The name undersells what they grow into.

Photo: 116916927065934112165 / iNaturalist · CC BY

01

Attitude and Handling

Males are very territorial, and every bullfrog treats movement near its face as food. That combination makes this a look-don't-touch amphibian. Handle only when you must, for a move or a vet trip, and only with clean, wet hands. Their skin absorbs whatever is on yours, soap and lotion included. Expect a defensive lunge, a loud shriek, sometimes a bite that draws blood. None of it is malice. It's just how the animal is built.

02

One Frog, One Enclosure

Floor space beats height. Give a horizontal enclosure with room to sit, turn, and burrow, and a lid that latches; a startled two-pound frog is strong. Adults need 36×18×18 at minimum, and 48×24×18 is the size that actually suits them. House one frog per enclosure, always. They're cannibals. A larger bullfrog will try to swallow a smaller one, and two of similar size will simply hurt each other. Racks suit small juveniles at best.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Froglet	12×12×8	18×12×12	Grows fast, gains grams a week when fed properly.
Juvenile	18×12×12	24×18×12	Cannibalistic. Solo housing, no exceptions.
Subadult	24×18×12	36×18×18	Powerful jaws. Feed with long tongs, never fingers.
Adult	36×18×18	48×24×18	2+ lbs at full size. Deep substrate to burrow; shallow water.

Enclosure sizes in inches, from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance. Bigger is better here: every one of these frogs is housed alone.

03

Heat, Light, and UVB

Warm the room, don't roast the frog. Ambient sits at 78–85 °F with a warm end of 85–88 °F, and nights are fine at 72–76 °F. Put every heat source on a thermostat, and keep all of them outside the enclosure. Heat rocks scorch amphibian skin and have no place here. UVB is beneficial rather than required. If you run one, give the frog deep substrate and cover so it can bury away from the light whenever it wants.

04

Humidity and the Water Dish

Bullfrogs sit in their water and they foul it fast, so plan on changing it daily. Make the dish wide enough for the whole frog and shallow enough that its head clears the surface. Humidity holds at 50–70%, which damp substrate and a big water dish will manage on their own. **Every drop of water that touches this frog must be dechlorinated first: chlorine and chloramine burn straight through amphibian skin.** Soap, lotion and cleaners stay away from the enclosure.

05

Substrate and Burrowing

Give them substrate deep enough to vanish into. Coconut fiber mixed with topsoil works, damp enough to hold a burrow and never soggy. Skip sand and gravel. A frog that lunges at everything swallows whatever the food lands on. Spot clean daily. When the ground dries in the wild, a bullfrog seals itself in a skin cocoon and aestivates. Never induce that in captivity. A frog kept damp and warm has no reason to shut down, and drying an enclosure out to force it is how keepers kill frogs.

06

Feeding Without Overfeeding

Everything that moves is food: insects, fish, rodents, even other frogs in the wild. In captivity the staple is gut-loaded insects dusted with plain calcium, D3-free and phosphorus-free, and a D3 calcium in its place once a week, plus the odd rodent. That swap is the frog's only D3, so no D3 multivitamin on top. Feed every 3–5 days, the short end while growing. Use long tongs: the feeding response doesn't tell fingers from a roach. Obesity is the usual keeper failure, so you stop the meal.

07

Health Red Flags

Amphibians hide illness until it's late, so watch the skin. Reddening across the belly and inner thighs is red leg, a bacterial infection that kills fast. Puffy, fluid-filled swelling is just as urgent. A rubbery jaw, trembling legs, or a frog that can't push itself upright points to missing calcium. Constant slime and restlessness usually mean a water problem. None of these are wait-and-see: get to a vet who treats amphibians that week.

Husbandry data: Habitat-OS species library. Structure follows the NARBC show handout series. Every animal is an individual — when in doubt, ask the breeder at the table or a reptile veterinarian.