



White's Tree Frogs

Pelodryas caerulea

BEGINNER · 3-5 IN ADULT · 15-20 YR LIFESPAN · NOCTURNAL · AUSTRALIA & NEW GUINEA

Recently moved to Pelodryas; most books still say Litoria caerulea. Meet the frog that looks like it's smiling. White's tree frogs ('dumpies' to their fans) are plump, waxy, unhurried natives of Australia and New Guinea, and the closest thing amphibians offer to a beginner's guarantee: hardy, long-lived, content in a modest vertical tank. The honest catch is the skin. It absorbs whatever it touches, so dechlorinated water and restrained, wet-handed contact aren't niceties. They're the whole game.

AT A GLANCE	
Difficulty	Beginner
Adult size	3-5 in
Lifespan	15-20 years
Temperature	75-82 °F day, 68-72 °F night
Basking spot	82-85 °F
Humidity	50-70%
UVB	Low output, beneficial
Diet	Crickets, roaches, moths
Feeding	Every 2-3 days; adults 2-3× weekly



With that waxy half-smile, White's tree frogs are a fixture at NARBC shows. Pick one with bright eyes and clean, intact skin.

Photo: Llez / Wikimedia Commons · CC BY-SA 3.0

01

Temperament & Handling

This is as calm as frogs get. A settled White's sits in plain view all day and does its hunting after dark, and it tolerates an occasional gentle move better than almost any amphibian. Still, permeable skin sets the rules: handle only when there's a reason, with wet, well-rinsed hands, and keep it brief. No soap, lotion or sanitizer residue. Most of the relationship happens at arm's length, and the frog is happier for it.

02

Housing by Life Stage

Height beats floor space for an arboreal frog. A single adult needs 18×18×24 at minimum, with 24×18×36 the comfortable target; the table below tracks the climb from froglet to adult. Furnish with sturdy diagonal branches, cork rounds and broad-leaved plants, and use a tight-fitting screen top. These frogs walk up glass like it's a sidewalk. Groups work only when every frog is the same size; a White's will swallow a smaller roommate without ceremony.

STAGE	MINIMUM	PREFERRED	NOTES
Froglet	12×12×18	18×18×18	Small froglets; start on pinhead crickets and fruit flies.
Juvenile	18×18×18	18×18×24	Hardy and tolerant, the classic beginner's tree frog.
Subadult	18×18×24	18×18×24	Small groups can work with space: matched sizes only.
Adult	18×18×24	24×18×36	Prone to obesity. Feed adults 2-3× weekly, not daily.

Enclosure minimums and preferred sizes from Habitat-OS life-stage guidance; dimensions in inches, vertical orientation at every stage.

03

Heat & Light

Keep days at 75–82 °F with a basking patch of 82–85 °F near the top, and let nights slide to 68–72 °F. That drop is normal and welcome. A low-wattage bulb over the screen, run on a thermostat, is all it takes; heat rocks have no place anywhere near amphibian skin. Low-output UVB is beneficial rather than mandatory: mount it over the mesh with a shaded end so the frog chooses its own dose.

04

Humidity & Water

Hold humidity at 50–70%, moist but not swampy. This frog hails from woodland and even arid scrub, so ventilation matters as much as moisture; stagnant, dripping air causes more trouble than a dry afternoon. A light daily misting and a shallow soaking dish cover it. **Every drop of water this frog touches must be dechlorinated:** chlorine and chloramine pass straight through amphibian skin. Keep soaps, sanitizers and aerosols away from the enclosure entirely.

05

Substrate & Enrichment

Floor it with a few inches of coconut fiber or a soil-based tropical mix topped with leaf litter. It holds moisture without going sour. Skip gravel and small bark chips; anything a lunging frog can swallow is a hazard. The real furniture is overhead: cork tubes, angled branches and broad-leaved plants (live pothos earns its keep) give climbing routes and daytime hides. Spot-clean promptly and wipe glass with hot water only: whatever coats the surfaces ends up in the frog.

06

Feeding

White's are insect eaters with zero portion control. They will take every cricket you offer and ask for the tongs too. Feed gut-loaded crickets, roaches and the occasional moth every 2–3 days while growing, 2–3 times weekly as adults. Dust plain calcium (no D3) at most feedings, with a multivitamin weekly, twice monthly once grown. Without UVB, a D3 calcium replaces it once or twice a week. Obesity is the signature ailment: heavy brow ridges mean feed less. A round frog is not a healthy frog.

07

Health Red Flags

On an amphibian, the skin is the medical chart. Reddening or pinpoint bleeding on the belly and thighs, the classic 'red-leg', is septicemia and a same-day emergency. Also take seriously: patchy sloughing skin, cloudy eyes, bloating, constant sitting in the water dish, or steady weight loss. Any of these earns a prompt trip to an amphibian-experienced exotics vet. Frogs hide illness until late; believe the skin before you believe the appetite.

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.