

**KEEPING ADVICE SHEET**

# Tree Frogs

## Northern Green Tree Frog

*Litoria caerulea*



### Northern Green Tree Frog

(*Litoria caerulea*) – Adult length 7.7 cm (Male), 11.0 cm (Female). Category 2.

### Western Green Tree Frog

(*Litoria moorei*) – Adult length 6.4 cm (Male), 7.4 cm (Female). Category 2.

### Magnificent Green Tree Frog

(*Litoria splendida*) - Adult length 10.0 cm (Male), 10.6 cm (Female). Category 3.

Frogs are primarily nocturnal, with occasional daytime activity.

## Western Green Tree Frog

*Litoria moorei*



**NATURAL HABITS:** Northern and Magnificent Green Tree Frogs occur in a variety of habitats, such as woodland and forest in the Kimberley. Western Green Tree Frog occurs in the southwest corner of WA and are usually found among vegetation within or near permanent water, including swamps, rivers, garden ponds and street drains. All three tree frogs are found in association with human habitations, frequently in toilet blocks and water tanks.

# Magnificent Green Tree Frog

*Litoria splendida*



**HOUSING:** Tree frogs do well in captivity if the correct conditions are provided. An aquarium makes a good frog vivarium, but must be at least 50 x 25 cm floor area to house up to four adults. Do not over crowd and always keep similar sized frogs in the same cage: large frogs will eat the smaller ones. A securely fitted cover is absolutely necessary to stop escapes, but provide good ventilation. This can be a wooden frame covered with fly-wire, weld-mesh or shade-cloth that sits flat on top, or it can be constructed so as to extend the height of the cage. Enclosures must be secure and escape proof.

**CAPTIVE ENVIRONMENT:** Decorate the cage with branches and living plants. Use smooth-leaved, non-toxic plants - your local nurseryman can advise on these. Bromeliads, philodendrons, bird's nest ferns, *Pothos*, *Monstera* and spider plants are all suitable exotics, while local reeds and sedges, such as *Lepidozamia*, *Restio* and *Lomandra* are also suitable. Moss and other ground covers can be added for effect. Please note that native plants are protected and should not be removed from the bush. Plants can be left in pots for easy maintenance. The pots can then be hidden amongst smooth rocks, bark, palm fibre etc for an attractive, natural looking effect.

**HUMIDITY & WATER:** Tree frogs require high levels of humidity. If using an aquarium, the cage floor can be partitioned with glass and silica sealant to provide a pond section, while the remainder is covered with pebbles or rounded gravel. Ideally use a bio-filter, similar to that used for fish aquaria, to keep the frog's pond water clean. Alternatively, provide a large shallow bowl that can be removed and cleaned more readily. Mist the enclosure every 3-4 days with a spray bottle. Preferably use rainwater; otherwise tap water that has been de-chlorinated chemically or has been sitting in a bucket for a couple of days.

**TEMPERATURE & LIGHTING:** Use full spectrum UV fluorescent lighting 12-14 hours per day. This needs to be replaced every six months or so to maintain its effectiveness. Using a small spotlight, provide a basking area with access to a cooler zone. Maintain day temperature gradient between 24-30°C allowing night temperatures to drop about 19-25°C lower. Use a low wattage heat lamp in a well-ventilated enclosure.

**FOOD:** Frogs have voracious appetites and generally only eat live food, as movement is required to stimulate their feeding. A variety of invertebrates should be provided, such as flies, crickets, moths and mealworms. When selecting mealworms, choose those that have recently moulted and therefore have a softer, more easily digested 'skin'. Large individuals may eat pink baby mice. Always offer variety for proper nutrition. Dusting food items with calcium/vitamin powder will be advantageous. Feed about twice per week, when frogs are active.

**CAPTIVE BEHAVIOUR:** These tree frogs will adjust readily to captivity. Most will become docile with regular attention; however avoid excessive handling, as this may cause stress and increase the risk of disease by compromising the skin's protective ability. Always wash hands with warm soapy water before handling, rinsing very thoroughly to remove all chemical residues, such as soap, which are harmful to frogs. Make sure that your hands are wet before you handle the frog. As always, wash your hands thoroughly again after handling animals. Alternatively you can use a clean plastic bag as a glove.

**BREEDING:** Compatible pairs will breed if suitable conditions are provided. The Western Green Tree Frog breeds during summer but there is no information yet available on captive breeding. For Northern and Magnificent Green Tree Frogs withhold misting for 5-6 weeks and reduce temperature to around 22°C while providing 10 cm of water and 10 hours lighting. Gradually return conditions to normal and mist heavily to stimulate breeding. They can have 3-4 clutches in a year.

**DISEASE NOTE:** A deadly disease, the chytrid fungus (*Batrachochytrium dendro-*

*batis*), has been discovered in various frog populations in WA. It infects both tadpoles and adults but does not appear to cause death until after metamorphosis. So to avoid spreading this fungus further, frogs and especially tadpoles should NOT be released into or moved around in the wild.

**FURTHER READING:** Frogs as Pets, A Guide to Keeping the Australian Green Tree Frog - Michael J. Tyler. Graphic House Printing, Adelaide SA.