



Common Name: White's Tree Frog

Scientific Name: *Litoria caerulea*

IUCN Red list Status: Least Concern

AZA Conservation Program: None

Class: Amphibia

Order: Anura

Family: Hylidae

Genus: Litoria

Habitat: Australia, New Guinea. Mostly inhabit warmer temperature rainforests and arid areas. Adapt well to seasonally dry or wet habitats, but prefer moist areas. They do not spend most of their lives in or near water, aside from mating season, but instead are arboreal.

Threats in the Wild: Human habitation (housing, logging, pollution); disease; invasive species; predation from snakes, lizards and birds, as well as non-native species such as dogs and cats; the pet trade. Long term effects to populations take longer to spot due to longer life expectancy and large reproduction rates.

Physical Characteristics: As one of the largest varieties of tree frog their average size ranges 3-5 inches, with females being slightly larger than males. Color variations range from light blue, to emerald green, to brown or almost gray on a smooth dorsal surface. Ventral surface is typically milky white or cream colored and rougher skinned. Tree frogs are capable of some color changes, usually indicating either stress, a need to change body temperature, or a change in humidity in the surrounding environment. The skin is covered in a thick, waxy cuticle that protects against excess water loss. Tree frogs have long limbs, which make them good jumpers. They also have large discs, or pads, on each toe, and are very good climbers, able to adhere to wet vertical surfaces as easily as the trees they spend much of their lives in. Front toes are partially webbed, while back toes are nearly fully webbed. Females have a white throat, while males have a gray wrinkled vocal sac under their throat. The White's Tree Frog has a distinctive protrusion of skin extending out over the eyes that can become quite prominent if the animal becomes obese. Their eyes have horizontal slit pupils.

Reproduction: Sexual maturity is reached in the second year. In the warm summer months of Australia, males come down from treetops to make mating calls from rocks and logs near the water. The males grow black pads on their thumbs to help grip the females during *amplexus*, the mating embrace where the male mounts the female from behind and holds on for as long as several days behind her front legs. The female expels a gelatinous clutch containing 150-300 eggs, ranging in size from 1.1 to 1.4mm, through a sperm cloud up to 1.5 feet away, which then sink to the bottom of the watery substrate they were laid in. They will hatch in 1-3 days, and go through metamorphosis in 2-3 weeks.



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Longevity: About 16 years in captivity; longest lived on record was 21 years.

Diet: Herbivores as tadpoles, feeding on vegetable matter, miniscule plants, algae, detritus, and surface scum. Carnivores as adults, eating anything that they can fit whole in their mouths including insects, spiders, earthworms, even small mice. At the Zoo they eat crickets.

Miscellaneous: Common name comes from John White, the first scientist to describe the tree frog in 1790. Skin secretions from White's Tree Frogs have many antibacterial and antiviral benefits to humans, such as fighting staphylococcus bacteria that cause cold sore abscesses, lowering blood pressure, and fighting HIV. A toxin in their skin called *Caerulein* has been produced synthetically to treat abnormal blood pressure. As an amphibian, tree frogs are a good indicator species, alerting environmentalists to potential hazards in their habitat. Obese frogs develop fatty ridges over their eyes and become rotund, earning the species the nickname "Dumpy Tree Frog."

Signs of Stress: Drastic color change, heavy breathing, excessive vocalization, trying to get away.

Handling: Spray hands with RO water before touching the frog with your bare hands. Scoop the frog up with both hands, let the frog get situated in one hand keep firm but gentle hold, do not let it jump away.

