

Poison Dart Frogs

Poison dart frogs are some of the most colorful and deadly frogs on the planet. Their bright colors warn potential predators of their toxicity. The poison comes from the frog's skin, so any animal that tries to eat one of these dangerous frogs will be affected by the poison. Scientists believe that the poison is transferred to the frogs from the food that they eat in the wild. They are called "poison dart frogs" because some indigenous Amazonian tribes collect the poison from the frogs and put it on blowgun darts, which are used while hunting. Many poison dart frogs display parental care to eggs and tadpoles, which is rare amongst frog species.



Green and black dart frog
Dendrobates auratus



Dyeing dart frog
Dendrobates tinctorius



Golfdulcean poison frog
Phyllobates vittatus



Red-eyed tree frog

Agalychnis callidryas

Diet: crickets, moths, flies, grasshoppers and other insects

Habitat: lowland tropical rainforests with high humidity

Range: Mexico, Central America

Status: least concern

Red-eyed tree frogs get their name from their distinctive eyes. It is not known whether the eyes aid in their nocturnal lifestyle or if they are a defense mechanism known as "startle coloration," which startles would-be predators and gives the frogs a chance to flee. Eggs can differentiate between benign vibrations such as rainfall and the vibrations of an approaching predator, such as a snake, and will hatch early when threatened. Red-eyed tree frogs are a charismatic rainforest species and are frequently associated with rainforest conservation programs.

AMPHIBIANS



Aquatic caecilian

Typhlonectes natans

Diet: invertebrates, insects and worms

Habitat: seasonally flooded grasslands, river, lakes, marshes

Range: Colombia and Venezuela

Status: least concern

Although sometimes mistakenly called a "rubber eel," caecilians are actually amphibians. They breath air from the surface and absorb air through their skin like other amphibians such as frogs and salamanders. Aquatic caecilians are limbless. They can sense light and dark shapes with their covered eyes and hunt by using their sense of smell. They have a strong skull which they can use for digging or burrowing. Most caecilian species live underground and are rarely seen by humans.



Suriname toad

Pipa pipa

Diet: small fish and invertebrates such as worms and insects

Habitat: slow moving waterways

Range: Amazon Basin and Caribbean

Status: least concern

One of the most remarkable things about the Suriname toad is its reproductive habits. The males grab the female in a position called amplexus and the pair perform somersaults in the water. After the male fertilizes the eggs, the eggs stick to the female's back and the female remains still. The eggs sink into the skin and the skin grows over the fertilized eggs. The babies emerge directly from the mother's back.



Amazon milk frog

Trachycephalus resinifictrix

Diet: invertebrates, mostly spiders and insects

Habitat: tropical rainforest canopy

Range: throughout the Amazon Basin

Status: least concern

The name "milk frog" comes from the poisonous milky secretion that they emit when threatened. They have large vocal sacs and can produce a loud call. Males will vocalize from a water-filled tree cavity on a clear night to better carry the sound of their call.



Panamanian golden frog

Atelopus zeteki

Diet: small invertebrates: ants, beetles, flies, wasps, silverfish, spiders and caterpillars

Habitat: terrestrial and diurnal, living in montane forests

Range: Central Panama

Status: critically endangered

One frog contains enough toxins to kill 1,200 mice, and their bright coloration warns potential predators of this defense. Due to their high toxicity, they amble confidently through the forests in the daylight, with casual response to potential threats. Panamanian golden frogs are technically toads despite their name.



Smoky jungle frog

Leptodactylus pentadactylus

Diet: insects, small reptiles, amphibians, mammals, birds

Habitat: subtropical or tropical lowland forests, swamps, riverbanks or marshes

Range: Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia and Brazil

Status: least concern

When threatened, smoky jungle frogs will try to appear larger by inflating their lungs and standing tall on all four legs and will also emit a high-pitched shriek. They release a slippery, mucus-like secretion from their skin, which is toxic to many animals.

Snakes of the Rainforest

Tropical rainforests are home to a wide variety of snakes species. Many of them use trees to their advantage, lying in wait for unsuspecting prey to come within reach. These arboreal predators can grasp tree branches with their tails and use it as an anchor from which to ambush prey. Some also have heat sensors, which help them to detect prey in the dense canopy. Numerous rainforest snakes are threatened by habitat destruction, as well as being hunted both for their skin and for the pet trade.



Photo: Marianne Hale

Emerald tree boa

Corallus caninus

Diet: rodents, lizards, frogs, birds, monkeys, bats

Habitat: tropical rainforest canopy

Range: Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Brazil

Status: not evaluated

They have a prehensile tail to secure themselves in a tree. Their sharp teeth pierce prey to constrict and suffocate it.



Amazon tree boa

Corallus hortulanus

Diet: birds, bats, frogs, rodents, lizards, marsupials

Habitat: a wide variety of forests, from humid rainforests to dry savannas

Range: throughout the Amazon Basin

Status: not evaluated

These ambush hunters have good eyesight and will hang from a branch in an "S" shape and strike at prey.



COMING SOON

Baron's green racer

Philodryas baroni

Diet: small mammals, reptiles and amphibians

Habitat: forest and savanna woodlands

Range: Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay

Status: not evaluated

This green snake is venomous. Their venom is not fatal to humans but can cause localized swelling and discomfort.



Red-tailed boa

Boa constrictor constrictor

Diet: small mammals, amphibians, birds, eggs and other snakes

Habitat: woodlands and tropical forest

Range: Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina

Status: not evaluated

These boas are ambush hunters; they will squeeze their prey until it suffocates, then swallow it whole. They can grow to 10 feet in length.



REPTILES



Plumed basilisk

Basiliscus plumifrons

Diet: flowers, fruit, insects, fish, small reptiles, amphibians, birds

Habitat: lowland forests, often near rivers

Range: Central American

Status: least concern

When chased by a predator, basilisk lizards can run on the surface of water for up to about 50 feet. The toes on the back feet have extra flaps of skin that spread out and add surface area, allowing the lizard to scurry across the top of the water. As their speed decreases, they will sink into the water. Once in the water, they are capable swimmers. This lizard is a member of the iguana family and has a very long tail that makes up about 75% of its entire body.



Photo: Brett Weinstein

Caiman lizard

Dracaena guianensis

Diet: primarily snails, also clams

Habitat: near rivers in tropical forests

Range: Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Peru

Status: not evaluated

Caiman lizards are semi-aquatic and will rest on tree branches above rivers. When threatened, they will drop from the branch into the water and swim away from danger. If threatened further, they can deliver both a powerful bite from their jaws and a strong blow from their tail. They have a clear third eyelid that they use like goggles while swimming. Adults grow to lengths of 2-4 feet and weigh between 3-6 pounds.



Photo: Charnett

Blue spiny lizard

Sceloporus serrifer cyanogenys

Diet: invertebrates, such as insects and spiders

Habitat: holes and crevices in rocky outcroppings or underground

Range: Central America

Status: least concern

Blue spiny lizards are diurnal, meaning they are most active during the day. When they aren't foraging for food, they spend much of their time sheltering from predators. They have large, pointy scales and blue coloring on their shoulders. Males also have blue-green on their throats, backs and undersides. They can reach 15 inches in length.



Photo: Janet Urech

ENDANGERED

Honduran spiny-tailed iguana

Ctenosaura palearis

Diet: plants, cactus, small animals

Habitat: dry forest and thorn scrub up to almost 3,000 feet above sea level

Range: Southeastern Guatemala

Status: endangered

These iguanas are the main species that feed on the fruit of the Pitayo organ pipe cactus and help distribute the seeds across the forest. Honduran spiny-tailed iguanas are especially active during the day when temperatures are warm. Even though they have an intimidating tail to defend against predators, Honduran spiny-tailed iguanas are most likely to flee if a predator is nearby.