

Green tree frogs provide beautiful music as well as rain advisories

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Listening to the sound of frogs singing in the evening may be one of the most comforting and soothing sounds in nature. Apparently, frogs sing for different reasons and in different ways. Some frogs have vocal pouches that are different sizes which stretch out and serve as a resonating chamber. Others make noises without any such chamber or sac. Large frogs make low, deep sounds, which means they call at a low frequency. While small frogs use high frequency by singing with high chirping noises. Green tree frogs (*Hyla cinerea*) are sometimes dubbed "rain frogs" because they sing the loudest when the weather is damp. From a distance the call of this frog sounds a bit like a cowbell, but when one gets closer to the frog it sounds more like quick-quick-quick, ow-oo-ah.

Green tree frogs are native to Florida. They are a small amphibian and are usually about two and a half inches in length. They are generally some shade of green, ranging from lime green to yellowish-olive depending on light and temperature. They are marked with a light colored line running from the jaw to the groin and some have patches of white or gold on their skin. They are smooth skinned frogs with very large toe pads. The males are smaller than the females.

These tiny green critters prefer lots of floating plants on the water where they can seek a dry spot and hop from one surface to another in search for food. They are insectivores and enjoy a meal of flies, mosquitoes, crickets and most any bug that gets close enough to snatch up with their quick tongue. This amazing, tiny creature can actually jump up to eight feet in a single leap! Since it is small in stature, it must be quick to escape those that would like to make a meal of it. It is able to stick to smooth surfaces with its large toe pads and can climb up walls or glass with minimal effort. Another fascinating feature of this tiny frog is that it can use its front legs to help push food caught on their tongues into their mouths. Green tree frogs have large eyes to see and hunt in the dark. The iris of the eye is golden.

Like most amphibians, this frog enjoys land and water, although this particular species is adapted for living in trees. The preferential habitats are wetlands such as swamps, marshes, grasslands and large trees near water. Green tree frogs are most active at night and can be found in or near trees searching for prey. During the day, the frog usually sleeps or rests on a nearby plant where it is camouflaged well and not visible to passing predators, which include Cuban tree frogs, snakes, birds and lizards.

Most females breed only once a year with a clutch of about 400 eggs, which take from four to fourteen days to hatch. Males use a distinct call to attract the females which is different from their other songs. Once the male has enticed a female, he grasps on to her in an effort to fertilize the eggs. Males will mate with as many females as they can.

These amazing creatures have the ability to change the color of their skin when necessary. They also produce chemicals that act as insect repellent. They get the water they need by absorbing it through their skin and they have lungs, but they breathe through their skin as well. They also have some webbing on their feet to assist swimming. The fingers are one-third

webbed and the toes are three-quarters webbed. They are also equipped with long strong hind legs to help them leap and shorter front legs for gripping.

Green tree frogs are one of the species that are in danger from their exotic relatives, the Cuban tree frogs. These invasive, larger frogs have found their way here from other areas of the world and certainly threaten the very existence of many species of native creatures.

Green tree frogs are one of the most beautiful, colorful frogs in Florida and are a treat to observe. They are an essential part of the food chain and are also vital ecosystem indicators due to their ability to absorb pollutants and chemicals in their environment. Hopefully, they will continue to thrive in nature and entertain future generations with their beautiful songs.