

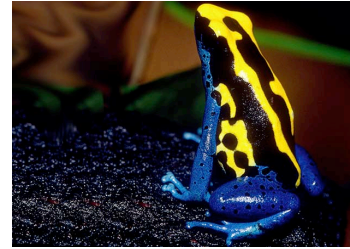


# POISON DART FROGS

Anura

Family: Dendrobatidae

Genus: *multiple*



**Range:** Southern Central America and north and central South America

**Habitat:** tropical rainforests

**Niche:** Diurnal, terrestrial; breed in trees, carnivorous

**Wild diet:** small invertebrates, particularly ants, which give them their poisonous properties in most cases

**Zoo diet:** pinhead crickets, fruitflies

**Life Span:** (Wild) 3-15 years

(Captivity) up to 20 years

**Sexual dimorphism:** Males slightly smaller

**Location in SF Zoo:** South American Tropical Rainforest and Aviary

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## APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

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There are 40 species of *Dendrobates* poison dart frogs. All have bright coloration (aposematic coloration), which warns predators of their toxic skin secretions (alkaloids obtained from insects they eat). They are small frogs (most are no bigger than a paper clip). They have a good vision used to help capture prey. Their long, sticky tongue darts out and captures their prey once spotted. Each foot contains four toes which each have a flattened tip with a suction cup pad which is used for gripping and clinging to vegetation in its habitat. They lack webbing and are poor swimmers and are found near water but not in it.

Poison Dart Frogs have no webbing between the toes on their feet, so they are poor swimmers and are not often found in the water.

**Weight:** < 1 oz (< 28 g)

**Length:** 1 - 6 cm

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## STATUS & CONSERVATION:

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Many species are threatened by habitat loss and over-collection for the pet trade.

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## COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

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The males are territorial, calling to advertise to females and to defend their area. Calls are species dependent and can be anything from a buzz to trilling whistles. Females are slightly less territorial, and do not call, but will wrestle with other females over their space.

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## COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

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Poison dart frogs breed in the trees during the rainy season. It is the females that facilitate courtship. She will locate a male and tap on its back with her hind feet to signal readiness for mating. Fertilization is external (amplexus). Eggs are laid in holes in tree limbs or in plants such as bryophytes or bromeliads that collect enough moisture to pool in the bottom to hold the tadpoles when they hatch. The tadpoles turn into tiny froglets up in the canopy. The frogs exhibit some maternal care by returning to the tadpoles and laying unfertilized eggs for them to feed on. In some other species, the male guards the eggs, and will transport the tadpoles on his back to small pools. Females are predatory on each other's eggs.

Incubation:	2 weeks	Sexual Maturity:	tadpoles reach transformation size in ~ 10 week
# of Eggs:	8 – 10 average	Weight at birth:	

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## MISCELLANEOUS

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Dart frogs, also known as arrow frogs, were named for their use by native peoples that dipped the arrow tips in their skin secretions for hunting mammals and birds. Three very toxic species of poison dart frogs from Colombia and South America are utilized by Indians to poison the tips of blowgun darts. The most poisonous frogs to humans are not in this genus. Poison dart frogs get their toxicity from some of the insects they eat which have feed on plants that have toxins. Other than certain snakes and large spiders, there are few predators that can cope with the noxious poisons of adult frogs. Since their captive diet does not include invertebrates with toxic compounds these frogs lose the poison from their skin.

The only natural predator of most of the poison dart frog family is a snake called *Leimadophis epinephelus*, which has developed a resistance to the frogs' poison. It is believed that the snakes detoxify the frog's poison with a substance contained in the saliva.

### Sources:

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