If you were a meat-eating jungle animal looking for a tasty snack, there is one brightly-colored creature you’d want to avoid eating at all costs – the poison dart frog!

Most poison dart frog species live in Central and South America. They come in a variety of bright colors, including yellow, gold, blue, red, green, copper, and black. Their colors warn potential predators to watch out! No, these frogs don’t bite. They don’t even have teeth. However, the poison in

**Poisonous Pets?**

Some people have poison dart frogs as pets. This is possible because frogs bred in captivity don’t produce poison. Frogs caught in the wild also lose their poisons after a time in captivity. Because of this, scientists think the frogs get their poison from the food they eat in the rain forest.
Their tongues zip out quickly to catch the food they eat: spiders and small insects like flies, termites, ants, mites, centipedes, and small beetles.

Medical researchers are currently studying how the poison that is produced by dart frogs might be useful. In fact, some medical researchers think that the poison from poison dart frogs could actually be used to make medicine for people. In the future, it may be used to make painkillers and heart medicine.

Poison dart frogs are an important species in the ecosystem of the rain forest. Like many other rain forest animal populations, the poison dart frog population is disappearing because of habitat loss and pollution. We can hope that conservation efforts will help poison dart frogs to thrive again in their natural environment.

About the Author

Guy Belleranti is an author of fiction, poetry, articles, puzzles, and humor for children and adults. He also works as a docent at the Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from his experiences teaching children about the wild animals at the zoo.
Poison Dart Frogs
by Guy Belleranti

1. According to the article, which feature of a poison dart frog alerts predators to avoid eating it for food?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

2. Based on the information in the reading passage, infer (draw a conclusion) which type of climate best suits poison dart frogs.
   a. warm and dry
   b. warm and moist
   c. cold and dry
   d. cold and moist

3. How are poison dart frogs in captivity different from poison dart frogs in the wild?

_____________________________________________________________________________________________
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4. According to the article, what role do poison dart frog parents play in the development of their offspring?
   a. Adult poison dart frogs stay with their tadpoles until they reach adulthood.
   b. Adult poison dart frogs catch insects for food and feed them to their offspring.
   c. Adult poison dart frogs carry their tadpoles to still waters to complete their growth.
   d. Adult poison dart frogs do not play any role in the development of their offspring.

5. If you are hiking through the South American jungle, where might you find a poison dart frog?
   Circle all the correct answers.
   a. high in the trees
   b. in the river
   c. deep in a cave
   d. among leaf litter and rocks
Poison Dart Frogs
by Guy Belleranti

The scrambled words below are vocabulary words from the article. Unscramble each word and write it on the line. Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.

1. ____________________________ p e t l o v e m e n d
   hint: the process of growth

2. ____________________________ t y t c a v i p i
   hint: the condition of being confined

3. ____________________________ s m e o s t e y c

4. ____________________________ i t e r l t
   hint: debris on a forest floor made up of plant material

5. ____________________________ s c a i v i t e
   hint: empty or hollowed-out places inside solid objects

6. ____________________________ t h a t i b a
   hint: the environment in which an animal or plant lives

7. ____________________________ t o p l a p o u i n
   hint: all the animals of one species in the same area

8. ____________________________ r e t i b s
   hint: groups of native people who live together
In the article, “Poison Dart Frogs,” you learned that some people keep poison dart frogs as personal pets. (Captive poison dart frogs are not able to produce poison.) You also learned that poison dart frog populations in the wild are diminishing, or becoming smaller.

On the lines below, address the following topic: Do you think people should keep exotic animals, such as poison dart frogs, as pets? Why or why not? Think about possible benefits or risks that could come from keeping exotic animals as pets. Be sure to use your own examples.

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__________________________________________________________________________________________
1. According to the article, which feature of a poison dart frog alerts predators to avoid eating it for food?

   A poison dart frog’s bright colors alert predators to stay away.

2. Based on the information in the reading passage, infer which type of climate best suits poison dart frogs.

   - warm and dry  
   - warm and moist
   - cold and dry  
   - cold and moist

3. How are poison dart frogs in captivity different from poison dart frogs in the wild?

   Poison dart frogs in captivity do not produce poison, whereas those in the wild do.

4. According to the article, what role do poison dart frog parents play in the development of their offspring?

   - Adult poison dart frogs stay with their tadpoles until they reach adulthood.
   - Adult poison dart frogs catch insects for food and feed them to their offspring.
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Poison Dart Frogs
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The scrambled words below are vocabulary words from the article. Unscramble each word and write it on the line. Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.

1. development
   hint: the process of growth

2. captivity
   hint: the condition of being confined