Males, when attracting a female, are bright purplish blue with a turquoise crown and a contrasting black space between the eyes and the bill (lores). The upper back, wings and tail are also black. Their under wings are yellow, the legs bright red. When not breeding these males, unlike a lot of species, have eclipse plumage which resembles the females except for the black upper back, wings and tail.

The females are a dull, pale green with some facial whitish streaking, pale, greenish white eyebrows and a whitish ring around the eyes. The chest and abdomen is also pale yellow with blurred, pale, green streaks; the under wings are yellow too. Their legs are dull red. The juveniles are similar in colour to the adult females but the undersides are less streaked. All red-legged honeycreepers have a black, downward curving bill (decurved), 18 mm long.

Size: Length 11.5 to 13 cm; weight 14 g.

Found in Mexico south to Ecuador, Peru, northern Bolivia and Central Brazil. They are also found on Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, Margarita and Gorgana Islands.

This species prefers the canopy and sub canopy of tropical rain forests but are also found in secondary woodlands as well as clearings with scattered trees and shrubs. They choose broadleaf trees over pine species, mostly below 1100 m but seasonally they are found at higher elevations. They are also common in residential areas and cocoa and citrus plantations.

These birds are omnivores and eat a large variety of fruits, nectar and insects.