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TORTOISES AND TURTLES

Natal Hinge-back Tortoise

Kinixys natalensis

Kinixys natalensis is one of the smallest hinge-back tortoises. It lives in hilly, rocky bush and thorn savanna in eastern South Africa and Eswatini and normally grows to 8-14 cm long. The hinge is weakly developed and is found only in adults. The species is rare and vulnerable in the wild, and little is known about its care, so it is not a tortoise for beginners.

Family: Testudinidae Former name: *Kinixys belliana natalensis*

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**8-16 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**30-50 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Savanna and rocky terrain**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**120 × 60 × 40 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**26-30 °C**
Basking spot	**32-35 °C**
Temperature, night	**20-24 °C**
Humidity	**50-70%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 2
Diet	**Insects, plants and worms/snails**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**1-3 eggs**
Incubation	**105-200 days** at 28-31 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Vulnerable (VU)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	Almost no published knowledge exists on the care of *Kinixys natalensis*, and the species is kept very little.
TEMPERATURE	By day the enclosure should be 26-30 °C, with a basking spot of 32-35 °C under a lamp at one end, measured on the substrate. Shelters at the cool end should be kept at 23-26 °C, and at night 20-24 °C is suitable.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	Humidity should be around 50-70 %. The figure is borrowed from *K. spekii* and is an estimate.
LIGHTING AND UVB	*K. natalensis* is diurnal. Sunlight is best. Indoors the species needs UVB lighting with a UV index of 2.0-3.0 at the basking spot (Ferguson zone 2). The zone is borrowed from *K. spekii*.
FEEDING	The diet is mainly plant material, but the animal also takes insects, snails and other small animals.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	The species is shy and withdraws into its shell or digs in when disturbed. The animal is difficult to handle and examine, so lift it from underneath with two hands and handle it as little as possible.
NATIVE RANGE	South Africa and Eswatini.