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TORTOISES AND TURTLES

Bell's Hinge-back Tortoise

Kinixys belliana

Kinixys belliana is a medium-sized African tortoise with an elongated shell and a movable hinge at the rear, which can close the shell over the hind legs and tail. The shell is 15-22 cm long. The species lives in savanna with a distinct rainy and dry season, needs stable warmth and a degree of humidity, and is easily stressed. Newly imported animals often carry many parasites.

Family: Testudinidae Former name: *Cinixys belliana; Kinixys schoensis* Published 16 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**15-22 cm** total length incl. tail
Lifespan	**30-50 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial**
Habitat	**Savanna**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**160 × 80 × 40 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**28-32 °C**
Basking spot	**32-35 °C**
Temperature, night	**22-24 °C**
Humidity	**60-80%**
Water	**Water dish**
UVB	**Essential** Ferguson zone 2
Diet	**Insects, fruit, plants and worms/snails**
Kept	**Singly or in groups**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Clutch size	**1-6 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1-2**
Incubation	**105-200 days** at 28-31 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Not Evaluated (NE)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE

Little reliable knowledge exists about the husbandry of *Kinixys belliana*, because much of the older knowledge dates from the time when several species were regarded as one.

TEMPERATURE

The animal must be kept warm, above 29 °C most of the time. The daytime temperature is 28-32 °C, and the basking spot is 32-35 °C, measured on the substrate.

HUMIDITY AND WATER

As a savanna species, *K. belliana* is less moisture-dependent than the forest species *Kinixys homeana* and *Kinixys erosa*, but it likes moisture and must be misted regularly.

LIGHTING AND UVB

K. belliana is active by day, but is most visible early and late in the day when the light is weak. Sunlight is best, but in Denmark UVB light is necessary: UV index 2.0-3.0 at the basking spot (Ferguson zone 2).

FEEDING

K. belliana is omnivorous, and juveniles are almost exclusively carnivorous.

BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING

The species is shy and withdraws into its shell or digs in when disturbed. It is most active early in the morning and late in the day.

NATIVE RANGE

Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Congo - Kinshasa, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania and Malawi.