

Hinge-back tortoises

Home's Hinged Tortoise: *Kinixys homeana*

A medium-brown colored tortoise with a light colored head and large eyes. The shell is sharply angular and falls off quickly at the back end. The species is found in Nigeria, the Congo and the Ivory Coast.

Bell's Hinged Tortoise: *Kinixys belliana*

This tortoise has a rounded back, and a lighter colored shell with dark markings. Generally widespread throughout central and southern Africa. It prefers a drier grassland habitat to the forest or riverbank habitats favored by *K. homeana* and *K. erosa*.

Schweigger's Hinged Tortoise: *Kinixys erosa*

Similar in appearance to *K. homeana*, this tortoise is the largest species of the genus. Adults may surpass 30 cm/ 12". *K. erosa* inhabits moist riverbanks and tropical jungles from the Congo to Uganda.



Kinixys belliana



Kinixys erosa

All species of hinge-back tortoise require constantly warm surroundings. *K. belliana* can tolerate drier environments than either *erosa* or *homeana* which both require very high levels of humidity. Failure to provide this will result in severe eye inflammation, possible respiratory problems and kidney disease. Hinge-back tortoises which are kept too dry will remain lethargic and inactive. An occasional spray of fine mist from a hand plant sprayer is also appreciated by most specimens. Access to water for bathing, or regular soaking is also highly recommended.

Temperatures for *Kinixys* should be maintained at circa 24°C - 27°C (75°F - 81°F) fairly constantly - although some *K. belliana* enjoy an occasional session of basking under a 'hot spot' of up to 28°C (83°F). Most hinge-back tortoises, especially *K. erosa* and *K. homeana*, actively dislike bright light and prefer a well shaded, warm and very moist habitat. A peat and leaf-litter substrate is ideal for these species.

Unlike most land tortoises, African hinge-back tortoises are omnivorous and are insectivores. In the wild their diets include snails, slugs, millipedes as well as fallen fruits, grasses and plants. In captivity all three commonly encountered species generally enjoy earthworms, mealworms, slugs, bananas, tomatoes, peaches, mushrooms, lettuce, melon and sliced orange. A small quantity of low fat dog food is also appropriate for this species but excessive amounts must not be given otherwise carapace deformities and liver or kidney damage may result. Live food in the form of crickets, snails, earthworms and zoophobas should also be provided at least once per week. Rapidly growing specimens, and egg-laying females, should be provided with a calcium supplement such as 'Repcal®' daily.

Do not mix hinge-back tortoises with other species and check specimens regularly for parasites; these species are highly susceptible to "worms" and other internal parasites, such as flagellate organisms.

- Tropical species
- Do not hibernate
- Omnivorous diet
- Some live food
- Require varying degrees of humidity
- Moist substrate required
- Require large to very large terrarium
- Regular soaking or constant access to water recommended
- Active at dawn and dusk - secretive
- Stress very easily

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