

'Extinct' Giant Tortoise Found after 100 Years

Why are scientists excited about this find?

- Scientists believed that the Fernandina giant tortoise was extinct.
- However, they recently found one and they believe there might be others living on the island.

Scientists have found a **species** of giant tortoise no one had seen for over 100 years! The Fernandina giant tortoise was thought to be extinct until one was spotted last month.

Fernandina giant tortoises live on the small island of Fernandina, in the Pacific Ocean. No one had seen one since 1906.

In fact, most scientists believed that the animal was probably extinct. Many giant tortoises have been killed in the last 200 years for food and their oil.

Fernandina is also a volcanic island and scientists worried that the volcanic lava could have wiped out the species.

This changed on Sunday 17th February when an adult female Fernandina giant tortoise was spotted in the lower part of the island. The tortoise is probably over 100 years old.

Researchers also found footprints and Fernandina giant tortoise poo on the island so they think there might be more giant tortoises living on the island.

The tortoise has been taken to a breeding centre on Santa Cruz, a nearby island. It will have some health checks and **genetic** studies to confirm that it is a Fernandina giant tortoise.

The island of Fernandina is part of the Galapagos **archipelago**. These are 19 islands in the Pacific Ocean, found around 620 miles from the coast of Ecuador in South America.

The Galapagos islands are famous for



Photo: Giant tortoises can live for over 100 years.

being the place where Charles Darwin developed his views on natural selection and **evolution** in 1835.

At this time, there were 15 different giant tortoise species on the islands, although now some have become extinct and most of the rest are endangered.

However, discoveries like this give scientists hope. There might well be other animals thought to be extinct hiding away somewhere!

Glossary

species A group of living things which are similar and can have young.

genetic Related to the study of genes, DNA and identifying species.

archipelago A group or chain of islands.

evolution The process of living things adapting and developing from their earlier forms.