

---

---

# African Pancake Tortoise

*Malacochersus tornieri*

**Class:** *Reptilia*

**Order:** *Chelonia*

**Family:** *Testudinidae*

## Characteristics:

Brown with radiating yellow markings on shell. Although 1½ up to 7 inches in length, most are smallish. Females larger than males but have a less distinct rayed pattern. Males have longer, ticker tails. Both have small, flat, flexible 1 inch high shell. Numerous openings in bones enhance flexibility - much like juvenile tortoises of other species. Flexible bridge between plastron and carapace allows it to be flattened as it seeks shelter in rock crevices.

## Behavior:

Spends time climbing among boulders and rocky hills for shelter using legs to wedge inside rocks when threatened. Emerges about one hour at a time basking and feeding in early AM. Does not live far from protection and can find known shelters quickly. Known to be the fastest tortoise in the world. After squirming into the rocks, they inflate themselves, making it near impossible to pull them out. If they fall on their backs, they can flip over quickly.

## Reproduction:

Breeds in January and February in the wild and year round in captivity. Combat between males prior to breeding thought to stimulate mating and improve fertility. Female lays one or two eggs at a time in loose, sandy soil and may produce more eggs every six weeks over the season. Incubation period 4-6 months. Hatchlings 1½ -2 in. long.

## Diet:

Wild: Herbivores. Grasses and fallen fruits.

Zoo: Greens, veggies, Tort pellets

## Conservation:

ICUN- Vulnerable. Low reproduction and pet trade are major threats. Tanzania has reduced number of exports and the European Economic Community has banned imports.

## FYI:

AKA: Softshell Tortoise, Crevice Tortoise, Tornier's Tortoise

Swahili name: Kobe



## **Range & Habitat**

Kenya and Tanzania in scrub brush, on rocky hills, or on kopjes (outcroppings).



**Lifespan:** up to 50 years in captivity, 35 years in the wild.

**Special Adaptations:** Flat shell and extreme agility allow it to flip back over quickly when climbing hills and rocky boulders.

## **IUCN Conservation Status:**

Vulnerable

