

Chelonoidis phantasticus

June 13, 2022

In news— Chelonoidis phantasticus, a giant tortoise species believed to be extinct for more than a century, a surviving member of which has been identified recently.

About Chelonoidis phantasticus-

- **A giant tortoise, found alive in 2019, has been confirmed to belong to a Galápagos species** long believed extinct.
- **Named Fernanda after her Fernandina Island home, the tortoise is the first of her species, Chelonoidis phantasticus,** to be identified in more than a century.
- **Chelonoidis phantasticus means “fantastic giant tortoise”.**
- Commonly called the Fernandina Island Galápagos giant tortoise, **the species was so far known only from a single individual, collected in 1906.**
- Although Fernanda was found on Fernandina Island itself, and although tortoises can't swim from one island to another, they can be carried from one Galápagos island to another during major storms.
- There are also historical records of seafarers moving the tortoises between islands.
- To determine Fernanda's species definitively, researchers sequenced her complete genome and compared it to the genome they were able to recover from the specimen collected in 1906.



Note: Fernandina Island is the third largest, and youngest, island of the Galápagos Islands, as well as the furthest west. Like the others, the island was formed by the Galápagos hotspot. The island is an active shield volcano that has most recently been erupting since April 11, 2009.