

Belgian Shepherd dog sniffs out S.Africa's rare tortoise

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Two-year-old Brin is the first dog to help with animal tracking and

[conservation](#) in South Africa, said Justin Lawrence of the group CapeNature.

After six months of training the dog started working full time late last year, tracking down and detecting the geometric [tortoise](#).

Brin's work helps with monitoring, [population estimates](#) and in search and rescue operations. It is estimated that there are only a few hundred such tortoises left in the wild.

"This is very new in South Africa," said Lawrence. It is the "first live target conservation detection work of its kind ever done in South Africa".

The geometric tortoise, which sports a bright yellow and black shell, is found only in the low-lying shrublands of South Africa's Western Cape province.

It faces threats from wheat and wine farming, as well as urban development that have eaten into more than 90 percent of its remaining habitat.

It is now the third most endangered land tortoise in the world, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and is among the top 25 most endangered tortoises and freshwater turtles species in the world.

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