

Scientists try to mate Galapagos tortoise -- again

January 21 2011



In this July 21, 2008 file photo released by the Galapagos National Park, a giant tortoise named "Lonesome George" is seen in the Galapagos islands, an archipelago off Ecuador's Pacific coast. Scientists are still hoping to mate the elderly giant tortoise from the Galapagos - even though efforts over the past two decades have failed. On Thursday, park officials said that they are providing two new female partners for George, who is believed to be the last living member of the *Geochelone abigdoni* species. (AP Photo/ Galapagos National Park, File)

Will Lonesome George ever become a dad? Scientists are still hoping to mate the near century-old giant tortoise from the Galapagos - even though efforts over the past two decades have failed.

The [Galapagos National Park](#) said in a statement Thursday that they are providing two new female partners for George, who is believed to be the last living member of the *Geochelone abigdoni* species.

George is estimated to be between 90 and 100 years old - and could have at least 50 more years ahead of him. For the past 20 years, he has lived with two previous female partners, of the similar but different *Geochelone becki* species. The females laid eggs in 2008, 2009 and last year, but none resulted in viable offspring.

Scientists believe George may have a better chance of reproducing with his two new partners, of the *Geochelone hoodensis* species.

The two potential mates arrived on Santa Cruz island, where George lives, on Thursday from the archipelago's Spanish Island.

Genetic studies conducted by Yale University have shown that the newly arrived tortoises "are genetically closer ... more compatible, and could offer greater possibilities of producing offspring," the park's statement said.

The Galapagos island chain, about 620 miles (1,000 kms) off Ecuador's coast, is home to unique [animal species](#) that inspired Charles Darwin's ideas on evolution.

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Citation: Scientists try to mate Galapagos tortoise -- again (2011, January 21) retrieved 20 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-01-scientists-galapagos-tortoise-.html>

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