

**St Helena**

World's oldest tortoise caught in viral crypto death scam

Fake X account posing as his vet sparked global false reports of Jonathan's death while soliciting crypto donations

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 Prefer the Guardian on Google

At 194 years old, Jonathan, the giant tortoise, was a youngster when Queen Victoria ascended to the throne - and has now lived long enough to fall victim to a crypto scam.

News outlets including the BBC, Daily Mail and USA Today falsely reported his death after an X account posing as Jonathan's vet broke the news.

The post, attributed to "Joe Hollins", claimed: "Heartbroken to share that our beloved Jonathan, the world's oldest living land animal, has passed away today peacefully on Saint Helena.

"As his vet for many years, it was an honour to care for him - hand-feeding bananas, watching him bask in the sun and marvelling at his quiet wisdom. He leaves behind a legacy of resilience and longevity that inspired millions. Rest easy, old friend. You'll be missed more than words can say."



📷 Vet Joe Hollins with Jonathan. Photograph: Saint Helena/PA

Though the post received 2m views and was reported as fact by the UK's national broadcaster, checks by the Guardian revealed the account was based in Brazil. The real vet, who does not use X, said: "Jonathan the tortoise is very much alive. I believe on X the person purporting to be me is asking for crypto donations, so it's not even an April fool joke. It's a con."

The impostor was indeed asking for cryptocurrency donations at the time the [BBC published - and later retracted](#) - its report.

Jonathan, a Seychelles giant tortoise, is the world's oldest known land animal. He has lived on the grounds of the governor's mansion on Saint Helena, since 1882, when he arrived as a gift to the South Atlantic island.



Members of the royal family, including King George VI, Queen Elizabeth II (then known as Princess Elizabeth), Princess Margaret, and the Queen Mother (the then Queen Elizabeth) on Saint Helena, meeting Jonathan in 1947. Photograph: Saint Helena/PA

Nigel Phillips, the governor, was getting ready for bed on Wednesday night when he was inundated with anxious messages. He got up and searched the grounds to check on the tortoise. “Jonathan is asleep under a tree in the paddock,” he told the Guardian, adding that the animal was “very much alive”.

On Thursday morning, Phillips joked that Jonathan had issued a press statement: “The report of my death was an exaggeration ... Mark Twain, not Oscar Wilde. Jonathan would nonetheless have had the chance enjoy both their works in the original first editions.”

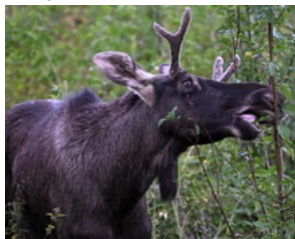
Despite being blind from cataracts and having lost his sense of smell, Jonathan remains hale and hearty with a strong appetite for bananas and a healthy libido - he tries to mate with two younger tortoises who also reside on the governor’s property.

A local celebrity, the tortoise has appeared on the reverse of Saint Helena’s 5p coin.

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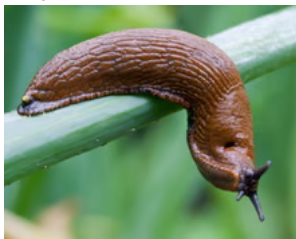
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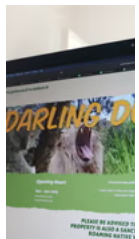
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