

# A wider range than suspected: new locality for the endemic Mauritian dung beetle *Nesosisyphus pygmaeus* (Coleoptera: Scarabaeidae)

Saoud M. Motala <sup>1,2</sup> & Frank-Thorsten Krell <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 54, Mere Barthelemy street, Port-Louis, MAURITIUS [felicities@hotmail.com]

<sup>2</sup> Soil Biodiversity Programme, Department of Entomology, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, U.K. [f.krell@nhm.ac.uk]

**Abstract:** A second locality for the endemic Mauritian dung beetle *Nesosisyphus pygmaeus* Vinson (Coleoptera: Scarabaeidae) is recorded. The disjunct range of this species comprises Mt Ory and Brise Fer.

**Keywords:** Scarabaeidae, Sisyphini, dung beetles, distribution, Brise Fer

The endemic Mauritian dung beetle genus *Nesosisyphus* Vinson was well studied by its author some fifty years ago (Vinson 1946, 1951). The four known species have restricted ranges in the mountainous parts of the island. With 2.3-3.2 mm body length, *Nesosisyphus pygmaeus* (Fig. 1) is the smallest member of the genus and the smallest roller dung beetle of the world (Haaf 1955, 1959). Despite being alate, the species has previously only been recorded from Mt Ory (Vinson 1958). Vinson (1951) presumed the cause of this restricted distribution to be the rapid loss of the surrounding pristine forest over the last century (e.g. Vaughan & Wiehe 1937).

Recently, one of us (S.M.) found another population of *Nesosisyphus pygmaeus* in a new locality approximately 24 kilometres away from the already known locality Mt Ory, the details of which are as follows:

MAURITIUS, Brise Fer Forest; 20°22'S, 57°26'W; 35 individuals, 01-06.vii.2003, using baited pitfall trap (suspended chicken manure). Voucher specimens are deposited in The Natural History Museum, London.

We suppose that this population was previously unrecorded due to the inaccessibility of the Brise Fer forest. The creation of tracks in the recently established Black River Gorges National Parks has resulted in the opening up of previously poorly surveyed areas such as Brise Fer.

Overall, this finding highlights the importance of devising a proper monitoring programme on Mauritian biodiversity. The availability of updated knowledge on species distribution is important when conservation priorities are determined. Interestingly, this finding also suggests a more complicated speciation scenario than Vinson (1951) originally suggested for *N. pygmaeus*. The existence of more than one population of *N.*

*pygmaeus* should also reduce the risk of extinction of the species, at least by one step.

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**Figure 1.** *Nesosisyphus pygmaeus*, collected in the Brise Fer forest in July, 2004; scale: 2mm (Photo: Harold Taylor, NHM Photo Unit).