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***Rhysida longipes longipes* (Newport, 1845) in the Chagos Islands, Indian Ocean (Chilopoda, Scolopendromorpha, Scolopendridae).**

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INTRODUCTION

In March 2006 three specimens of scolopendromorph centipede were collected on Eagle Island (243.5ha), the second largest island of the Chagos Archipelago by NCC. They were identified as *Rhysida longipes longipes* (Newport, 1845) by JGEL. This is the first centipede to have been recorded from the Chagos Archipelago and is here described.

***Rhysida longipes longipes* (Newport, 1845)**

Branchiostoma longipes Newport, 1845 Trans. Linn. Soc. Lond., 19:411

R. l. longipes: Attems, 1930 Das Tierreich, 54:194.

Description of Eagle Island material.

Three specimens: specimen 1 body length 52mm, specimen 2.53mm, and specimen 3.27mm. Eagle Island, Chagos Archipelago, March 2006, under tarpaulin on the ground.

Colour of live specimens: antennae light orange, head and trunk reddish brown, last two segments brownish red, legs yellowish white with grey pigment beneath, ultimate legs orange. Colour after preservation in 99% ethanol for two months, Head and trunk dark violet, antennae dark blue, legs basally greyish yellow, distally greyish turquoise, ultimate legs blackish blue.

Antennomeres 18 (17 on one side in specimen 1), the basal four glabrous dorsally except for narrow anterior internal strip, the basal three glabrous ventrally. Antennae when reflexed reach about tergite 3.

Tergite paramedian sutures very fine, complete on tergite 4 in spms 1 & 2, but only on 6 and from 12 in spm 3 (possibly a juvenile character). Marginate from 8, 9 or 11, without spinules, ridges or corrugations.

Sternites with or without very short anterior paramedian sutures.

Ultimate leg coxopleuron long with two terminal and one subterminal spine, one lateral, no dorsal spine. Ultimate leg prefemur with three ventrolateral spines, two, three or four ventromedials, two or three dorsomedials and a corner spine.

Leg 1 with a femoral spur (only seen in specimen 1). Legs 1 to 3 with a tibial spur. Two tarsal spurs on legs 1 to 3 and 6 on right in spm 1, 1 to 7 in spm 2, 1 to 7 and leg 12 on right in specimen 3. The other legs to leg 19 with one tarsal spur, Legs 20 and 21 without.

The specimens have been deposited in the Natural History Museum, London.

Possible origin

The specimens show the characters of typical *R. l. longipes* as given by Attems (1930) with the exception of the antennae which have the basal four antennomeres glabrous as opposed to the normal three. Kraepelin (1903), however, noted that material from Ceylon [Sri Lanka] had four glabrous basal antennomeres and was perhaps, a separate variety. Attems (1930) described this as *R. l. longipes* var. *sinhalana*, presumably based on this material, but as an infrasubspecific category this has no taxonomic status. The Chagos islands are extremely remote and access to them is restricted such that there are very few visitors. Nevertheless, fishermen from Sri Lanka are sometimes found camping illegally on the island fishing for sea cucumbers; it is therefore possible that they are a potential source of introduction. Historically there were trade routes with Mauritius and the Seychelles but the Mauritian population of *R. longipes longipes* differs in that only the basal three antennomeres are glabrous and the species has not been reported from the Seychelles.

Biological notes

The species was found in damp areas underneath plant (mainly coconut) debris at ground level but also in damp and rotten coconut fronds still attached to the palms. When removing camp after a three month visit to Eagle Island to eradicate an introduced black rat (*Rattus rattus*) population, centipedes were discovered under almost all items that held moisture against the ground e.g. stored tarpaulins, tent groundsheets, logs for seating etc. Underneath one 2.5 x 2.5 m tent 11 individuals were found, two of which carried eggs, holding about 14 to 16 eggs in pairs on the underside of the body starting from about a third of the way down from the head. None of those seen were coiled around the eggs, which were held to the underside when the female was moving. Movement was slow but they did not have to move far (less than 1m) to find cover. A female with young was found at the base of a loosely attached palm frond 1.5m above ground level at the boundary between dense mangrove and palm swamp. She was coiled round them when first disturbed.

A "fully grown" individual predated another of equal size. Both were disturbed in palm litter one having the other by the head. The individual being held soon became

NOTES

still and the victor proceeded to consume the head before dragging its prey beneath palm debris.

Many hours were spent searching the island at night throughout the duration of the trip but contrary to expectations, no centipedes were seen to be surface active.

Acknowledgements

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A short note on the nesting biology of green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) on Cousine Island, Seychelles

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INTRODUCTION

The green turtle, *Chelonia mydas* (Linnaeus, 1766), is widely distributed throughout Seychelles, and the western Indian ocean (Frazier 1975). Hornell (1927) found it most commonly around the Aldabra group of islands. In the granitic islands, the green turtle was reported as abundant in the 1700s (Gerlach 1997), but by the 1980s their numbers had decreased significantly (Mortimer 2000), with estimates of between 10 (Mortimer 1984) and 30 (Frazier 1984) individuals nesting on these islands. Consequently, Gerlach (1997) has listed the green turtle as 'critically endangered' in Seychelles. This large decrease in the number of green turtles has been attributed mainly to its exploitation as food (Stoddart 1984).

Very little published information exists on the nesting biology of the green turtle in the granitic islands, especially on Cousine Island. Of the information that is