



Rhysida longipes longipes—a mother protecting her young

Alien species in Chagos

centipede *Rhysida longipes longipes* (Newport, 1845)

The first centipedes to be recorded in the Chagos were found on Eagle Island in 2006. They were definitively identified as *Rhysida longipes longipes*¹.

They were found in damp areas underneath plant debris, mainly coconut, at ground level, but also in damp and rotten coconut fronds still attached to the palms. The majority were found underneath tarpaulins, ground sheets, logs etc when clearing up at the end of a three month expedition based on the island. One centipede was disturbed with the head of another in its mouth. These centipedes are usually more active at night, but despite nocturnal searches they were only seen during the day.

Centipedes were not found on Eagle Island during extensive searches during an expedition in 1975. It seems very likely that they came to Eagle Island on a Sri Lankan fishing boat which was illegally poaching sea cucumbers and other species, an activity known to have taken place with the poachers using Eagle Island as a base. The issue of introduced or alien species is of global concern, and this illustrates clearly the additional dangers presented by poachers which visit islands of the Chagos Archipelago.

¹ Lewis J.G. and Cole N C. 2007. *Rhysida longipes longipes* (Newport 1845) in the Chagos islands, Indian Ocean (Chilopoda, Scolopendromorpha, Scolopendridae). *Phelsuma* **15**: 82-84.

Any observant sailor is encouraged to report suspicious vessels to the *Pacific Marlin* using email address BIOTAdmin@fco.gov.uk

The Chagos Conservation Trust is a charity (Registered in the UK No. 1031561) established in 1992 whose aims are to promote conservation, scientific and historical research and to advance education concerning the archipelago. The Trust is a non political association.

If you would like more information on the publications or membership, please contact the Secretary simonhughes@hughes-mccormack.co.uk.

Visit www.chagos-trust.org