

The Cephalopods of the Cocos-Keeling Islands Collected by C. A. Gibson-Hill

By W. J. REES

(Mollusca Section, British Museum)

Family NAUTILIDAE

Nautilus pompilius Linné 1758.

Native name: Untiarah.

Gibson-Hill says of this common and widespread species, "I never found any living specimens of this nautilus, but broken shells are very numerous along the coast of both the main atoll and North Keeling Island."

Family LOLIGINIDAE

Sepioteuthis lessoniana Lesson 1830.

Native name: Sotong.

These two female medium-sized examples call for no particular comment. Adam (1939) has revised the synonymy of this common Indo-Pacific species and gives full distribution records. The species does not appear to have been previously recorded from the Cocos-Keeling Islands. Gibson-Hill states that "this species is found in shallow, sandy water, inside the lagoon. It is not very plentiful, except during the months from March to June. The back is flecked with small, light blue-green specks, and there is a deep blue-green patch over the eye; in addition to this, the whole surface is speckled fleetingly with black and red brown."

Family OCTOPODIDAE

Octopus cyanea Gray 1849.

Native name: Gëreta.

These two female specimens of 39 and 70 mm. in mantle length clearly belong to *O. cyanea* and a comparison with Gray's type revealed no important differences. The dorsal surface of the body is of a warm orcheous red ground colour with faint bluish-purple markings, the latter forming a delicate, reticulate network on the base of the arms. The ventral surface is much paler in colour. The spots of colour noticed by Hoyle (1907) and Robson (1929) on the ventral side of the arms between adjacent suckers are well defined in both specimens. The ocelli,

too, are prominent and vary between phases 2 and 3 as defined by Robson. It is noticeable that the centrespot of the ocellus is darker and less reticulate in the smaller specimen than in the larger.

O. cyanea, a littoral species, is widely distributed in the Indian and Pacific Oceans and has been reported from places as far apart as the Red Sea and Hawaii. It does not appear to have been previously recorded from the Cocos-Keeling Islands.

Gibson-Hill records that "this octopus is fairly plentiful in cracks and crannies over the outer and middle sections of the barrier. The Malays catch it with a fishing spear, and eat it boiled, curried or dried. It reaches a length of about three feet along the arms."

Cephalopoda Literature Cited

- ADAM, W. 1939. Cephalopoda Part I. Le Genre *Sepioteuthis* Blainville 1824. Siboga-Exped., LVa, pp. 1-33: 1 pl.; 3 text-figs.
- HOYLE, W. E. 1907. The Marine Fauna of Zanzibar and East Africa, from the collections made by Cyril Crossland in 1901-1902. The Cephalopoda. Proc. Zool. Soc., London, 1907, pp. 450-461: 1 pl.; 10 text-figs.
- ROBSON, G. C. 1929. A Monograph of the Recent Cephalopoda. Part 1, Octopodinae, pp. 1-236: 7 pl., 89 text-figs.