

Tailless Whip Scorpion

Damon variegatus

Invertebrate

Scientific Name

Damon variegatus

Other Names

Tanzanian Giant Tailless Whip Scorpion

Range

Tanzania and Kenya

Habitat

Tropical and temperate scrub forests

Description

A small, spider-like animal with an oval shaped body, eight legs, one pair of eyes on the front of the body, and three along the sides. The first pair of legs are elongated and resemble feelers. Females are larger than males.

Average Size

Length:

Body: ½ – 3 in.

With legs: 7 ½ in.

Weight: ¼ to 1g.

Lifespan

In the wild: 2 – 3 years

In captivity: 2 – 3 years

Diet

In the wild: Insects, worms and crustaceans

In captivity: Insects and worms

Clutch Size

6 – 60 eggs

Incubation

Unknown

Sexual Maturity

Unknown

Predators

Small mammals, birds and humans

Population Status

Not threatened



Behavior

Although they are part of the arachnid (spider) class, Tailless Whip Scorpions (sometimes called Whip Spiders) are neither spider nor scorpion, but resemble a cross between the two. They belong to the order amblypygi. Nocturnal and arboreal, they protect themselves by hiding under leaves and debris by day. They have relatively poor eyesight and use their front whip-like legs as sensory organs to aid in hunting and orientation; they walk sideways with these front legs leading the way. Their pedipalps (leg-like mouthparts) capture and hold insect prey as it is torn apart by their chelicerae (fangs).

Males of the same species have extremely interesting ways of establishing dominance; When unfamiliar individuals encounter one another, they engage in a kind of fighting behavior. Individuals typically display their pedipalps to each other and flick one another with their long front legs. These fights can escalate, with males making full body contact with their bodies and pushing against each other.

Reproduction and Breeding

The male courts the female with trembling movements of his long front legs, guiding her to a sperm packet he has deposited. The female then inserts it into her reproductive opening. The eggs are kept in a membranous sac underneath her abdomen until they hatch. The white colored hatchlings are carried on their mother's back until their second molt, after which they scatter into the forest.

Conservation

These animals are not listed on IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) and are not protected in any part of their range. They are considered not threatened and are common throughout the world.

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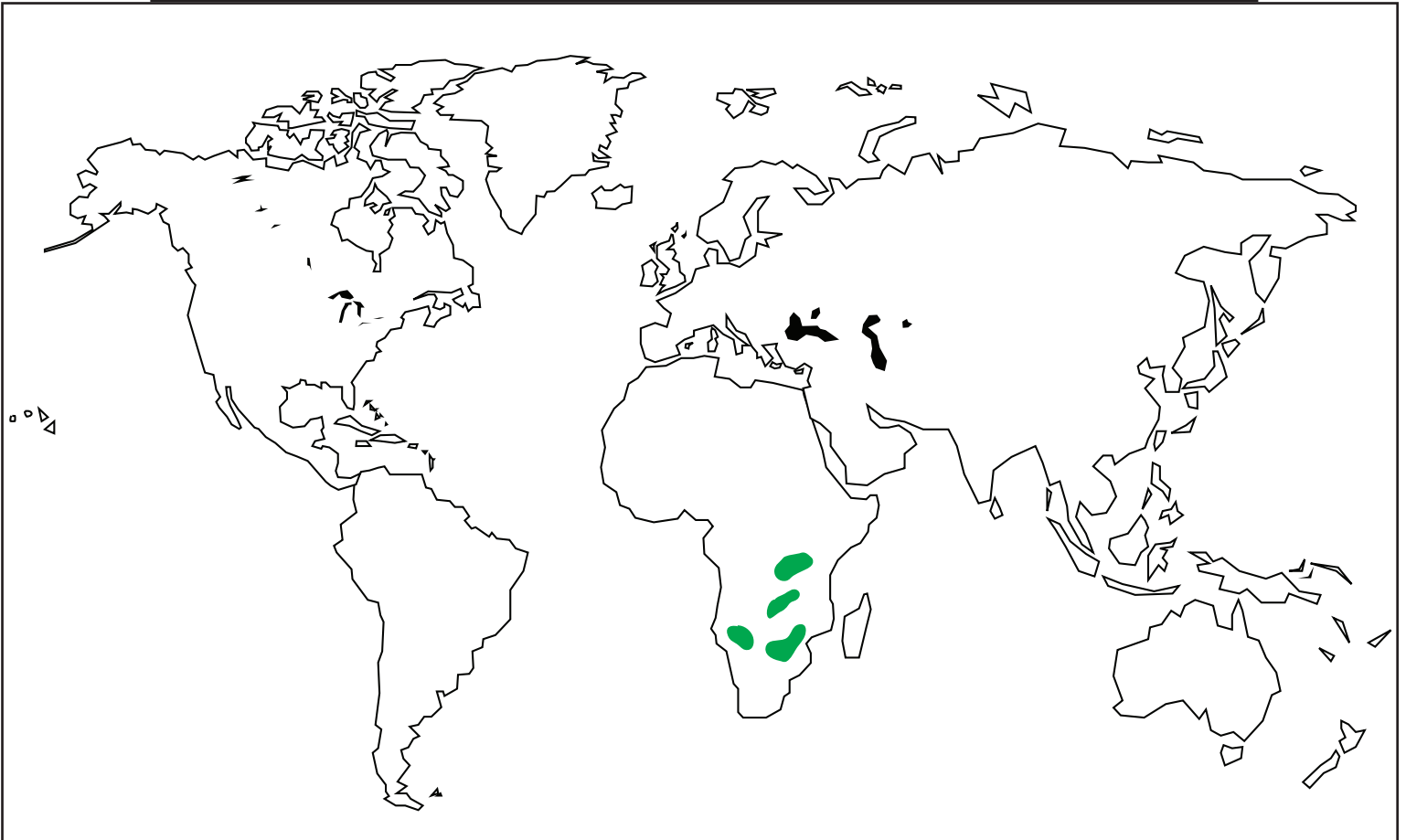
Amazing Facts

It has been estimated that there are about 150 known species of tailless whip scorpions.

Professor Moody used one of these to practice the “Unforgivable Curses” in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire.

This “scorpion” does not have a stinger or venom, but can pinch with its fangs.

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