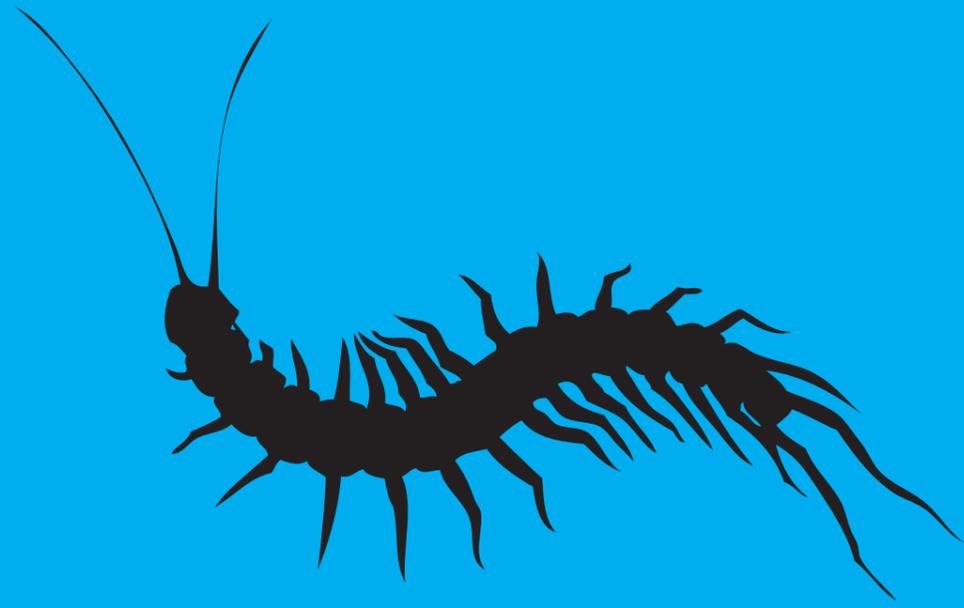


CENTIPEDES

CENTIPEDES HAVE BEEN ON EARTH FOR ABOUT 450 MILLION YEARS, EVEN BEFORE DINOSAURS.



LOTS OF LEGS

- Centipedes have many-segmented flattened bodies with a pair of jointed legs that stick out from the side of each segment.
- Centipede means '100 legs' but not all species have this many. Most species have about 15 pairs of legs, but some species have well over 100 pairs!
- Each pair of legs is slightly longer than the pair immediately in front of it, ensuring that they do not overlap and therefore the chance that they will collide with each other while moving swiftly. In extreme cases, the last pair of legs may be twice the length of the first pair.
- If a juvenile centipede loses a leg, it will regenerate a new good leg over the next moults. If an adult loses a leg, the regenerated leg is stunted and deformed.
- Juvenile centipedes do not have all their legs. New pairs of legs are added at each moult until they reach the right number.

CENTIPEDE SENSES

- Centipedes have antennae that are probably used to detect vibrations and may provide a sense of hearing.
- Centipedes are mostly nocturnal. They usually have eyes but may not have true vision.

CARNIVORES

- Centipedes are carnivores that kill or paralyse their prey with a venom-laden 'claws' on front legs (forcipules) that are specially adapted to help with feeding.
- Because they are predators, centipedes can usually move fast.
- The bite from larger centipedes can be very painful to humans and other animals.
- Centipedes are eaten by a great many vertebrates and invertebrates.



THERE ARE ABOUT 3000 CENTIPEDE SPECIES WORLDWIDE

- They are found on all continents except Antarctica and live in many different habitats. But while centipedes have an exo-skeleton, they have no waxy covering over this. This means they lose moisture rapidly in dry conditions so centipedes like moist micro-habitats such as leaf litter, rotting logs, or under bark, stones or pot plants. Some centipedes live under seaweed at beaches.
- There may be about 35 species in New Zealand, several of which are found nowhere else in the world. New Zealand species may be threatened by habitat destruction and by introduced predators such as rats and mice.

