



# An Albino Costa Rican Cat-eyed Snake, *Leptodeira rubricata* (Squamata: Dipsadidae)

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Albinism is a reduction or absence of integumentary pigmentation and almost always by the absence of pigmentation in the irises of the eyes (e.g., Bechtel 1995; Broghammer 2000). Albinism of any kind is rare in wild snakes because albinistic individuals rarely survive and reproduce (Bechtel and Bechtel 1981; Sazima and Di-Bernardo 1991; Krecsák 2008). Only two instances of albinism have been reported in snakes of the genus *Leptodeira*; Villa and Rivas (1971) described an albinistic *L. rhombifera* from Nicaragua and Miranda et al. (1985) an albino *L. annulata* from Argentina. Herein, we report the first documented observation of albinism in *L. rubricata* from Costa Rica.

The Costa Rican Cat-eyed Snake, *Leptodeira rubricata* (Cope 1893), inhabits the Pacific coast of Costa Rica and Panama (Chaves et al. 2013) to elevations of 100 m asl (Sasa et al. 2010). This semiarboreal, nocturnally active, and relatively common species is seen regularly on mangroves, as well as along inland streams of lowland tropical wet and humid forests (Savage 2002; Solórzano 2004). It feeds principally on small crabs and occasionally fish (McConnell 2014). This species typically has a red or orange dorsal ground color with more than 50 black to dark brown transverse bands, dark nuchal blotches, a median nape stripe (Fig. 1A), and a red venter heavily dusted with brown or pale yellow (Savage 2002).

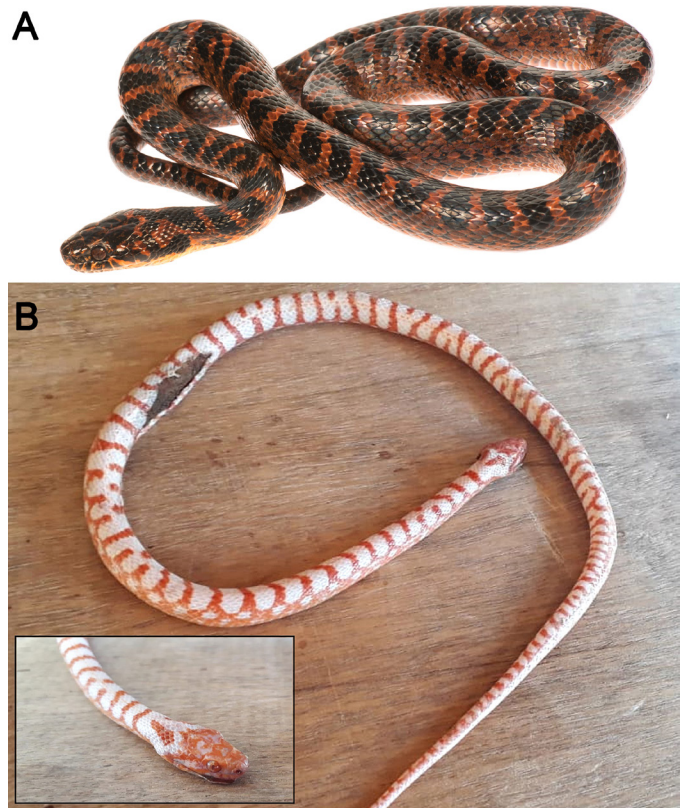
On 8 March 2019, we found a dead snake, which we identified as *Leptodeira rubricata*, in Marino Ballena National Park, which is located north of the Osa Peninsula in Puntarenas Province, Costa Rica. This snake had an orange-red dorsal ground color with more than 60 white transverse bands, white nuchal blotches, and a white median nape stripe (Fig. 1B). The partial integumentary pigmentation and the pink iris are characteristic of amelanistic albinism. This specimen was deposited in the Museum of Zoology, National University, Heredia, Costa Rica (UNA-ECB-MR-657).

Although the species typical coloration allows it to be distinguished from other species of *Leptodeira* (Solórzano 2004), the aberrant coloration of this snake could be confusing; how-

ever, the meristic and pattern elements remain distinctive. This is the first report of albinism in *L. rubricata*.

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**Fig. 1.** (A) A typically colored Costa Rican Cat-eyed Snake (*Leptodeira rubricata*). Photograph by Twan Leenders. (B) An albino Costa Rican Cat-eyed Snake (*Leptodeira rubricata*) from Marino Ballena National Park, Puntarenas Province, Costa Rica. Photographs by Roy Valverde Salas.

Museum of Zoology of the National University, and Twan Leenders for allowing us to use his photograph.

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