



Remarks on Coloration and Shedding in a Hart’s Glass Lizard, *Dopasia harti* (Anguidae)

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Hart’s Glass Lizard, *Dopasia harti* (Boulenger 1899), has been reported from southern China, Taiwan, and Vietnam (Müller and Hellmich 1940; Zhong 1993; Nguyen et al. 2011; Uetz et al. 2020). Adults and juveniles differ in coloration and pattern (Boulenger 1899; Brygoo 1988 [“1987”]); juveniles are white with dark dorsolateral saw-toothed lines running from behind the nostril and continuing onto the tail; whereas adults are sexually dichromatic (Lin et al. 2003). Most males have a pale olive-green dorsum with irregular blue markings fading ventrally to white (Boulenger 1899; Lin et al. 2003). Females are darker, sometimes with dark irregular dorsal markings that are never blue (Lin et al. 2003).

During a photographic survey on 13 September 2015, Dash Huang encountered an adult female Hart’s Glass Lizard protecting seven round white eggs in a rotting log on the Dahan Forest Road, Taiwan (22°24’38.0”N 120°44’19.1”E) (Fig. 1). The individual was unusually pale with only a hint of the usual pale olive-green color on the head and dorsum; eyes were clear and dark.

We suggested that this might be the first known case of leucism (an aberration resulting in the partial loss of pigmentation; Bechtel 1995) in the genus *Dopasia*. Records of leucistic individuals are rare in anguids (Jablonski and Purkart 2018; Harkness and Allain 2020). However, while discussing



Fig. 1. A Hart’s Glass Lizard (*Dopasia harti*) from Pingtung, Taiwan. Photograph by Dash Huang.

the possibility of leucism with Dash Huang, the photographer, he stated that pale color is typical of individuals before shedding, cited a published photograph of such an individual (Shang 2001: 153), and quoted Dr. Si-Min Lin (Department of Life Science, National Taiwan Normal University, Tshaj-pej, Taiwan), who maintained a few individuals (including two hatchlings) in captivity for many years and confirmed that the color of the lizard in the photograph resembled individuals close to shedding and that the paleness might indicate that the female had been protecting the eggs for an extensive period.

Consequently, we contacted three persons who we knew had kept captive *Dopasia harti* for their opinion of the lizard in the photograph. All agreed that the individual probably was leucistic. One of the three, Andreas Danier (in litt., 2020), stated that individuals of this genus normally shed three to four times per year; however, individuals are never as pale as the lizard in the photograph before shedding their skin. Instead, the pre-shed skin of Danier's wild-caught lizards was grayish and the colored cross-bars were always fully visible through the old skin. Moreover, the eyes were cloudy five to seven days before shedding. The other two keepers provided similar observations based on their own experiences.

We never personally saw the lizard in the photograph and can only speculate as to the reason for its lack of color. Although we cannot rule out the possibility that the pale color was attributable to an impending shedding of skin, we suggest that leucism is a more likely explanation.

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