



First Record of a Leucistic Indian Ratsnake, *Ptyas mucosa* (Linnaeus 1758) from India

Girish Choure¹, Shubham Adhikari², Pallavi Choure³, Ajinkya Unawane⁴, Lal Biakzuala⁵, and Hmar Tlawmtle Lalremsanga⁶

¹Indian Wildlife Rescue and Research Association (IRRA), SR No. 53/58, Sainath Nagar, Vadgoan Sheri, Pune–411014, Maharashtra, India

²99, Gayatri Apartments, Deendayal Nagar, Neredmet, Secunderabad–500056, Telangana, India

³Department of Zoology, Modern College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Ganeshkind, Pune–411016, Maharashtra, India

⁴Evolutionary Venomics Laboratory, Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

^{5,6}Developmental Biology and Herpetology Laboratory, Department of Zoology, Mizoram University, Aizawl–796004, Mizoram, India (htlrsa@yahoo.co.in)

Leucism, sometimes referred to as partial albinism, is a rare color defect in organisms caused by the lack of melanin in the skin; however, unlike true albinos, leucistic snakes have pigmented eyes (Bechtel 1991, 1995; Owen and Skimmings 1992; Chaudhuri et al. 2018).

The Indian Ratsnake, *Ptyas mucosa* (Linnaeus 1758), is a large (maximum length to 350 cm), non-venomous, predominantly diurnal colubrid snake widely distributed throughout the Indian Subcontinent (including the Andaman Archipelago), Bangladesh, eastern Iran, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and southeastern Asia (Das 2010; Purkayastha 2021). These snakes inhabit a wide variety of habitat types including forests and urban areas from sea level to 4,000 m asl (Das 2010).

Anand Shelke encountered a leucistic subadult female *P. mucosa* (SVL = 75 cm, tail length = 15 cm; Fig. 1) after receiving a rescue call on 17 December 2020 from the Sandipani School on Katol Bypass Road, Nagpur, Maharashtra (21.170252°N, 79.025005°E). The eyes were black, the body whitish with irregular dorsal blotches of brown, black, and gray and grayish patches on the posterior edges of the parietals, and the color of the tongue was less intense than in typically colored individuals. After recording morphological data, the snake was released into suitable habitat at the site of collection.

Cases of albinism and unusual color morphs have been recorded in *P. mucosa* (Mahabal and Thakur 2014). However, this record represents the first confirmed case of leucism in an Indian Ratsnake from India. Photographic vouchers have been submitted to the Gallery of the Indian Wildlife Rescue and Research Association (IRRA), Pune, Maharashtra, India (IRRA/G-057, Fig. 1A; IRRA/G-058, Fig. 1B; IRRA/G-059, Fig. 1C).

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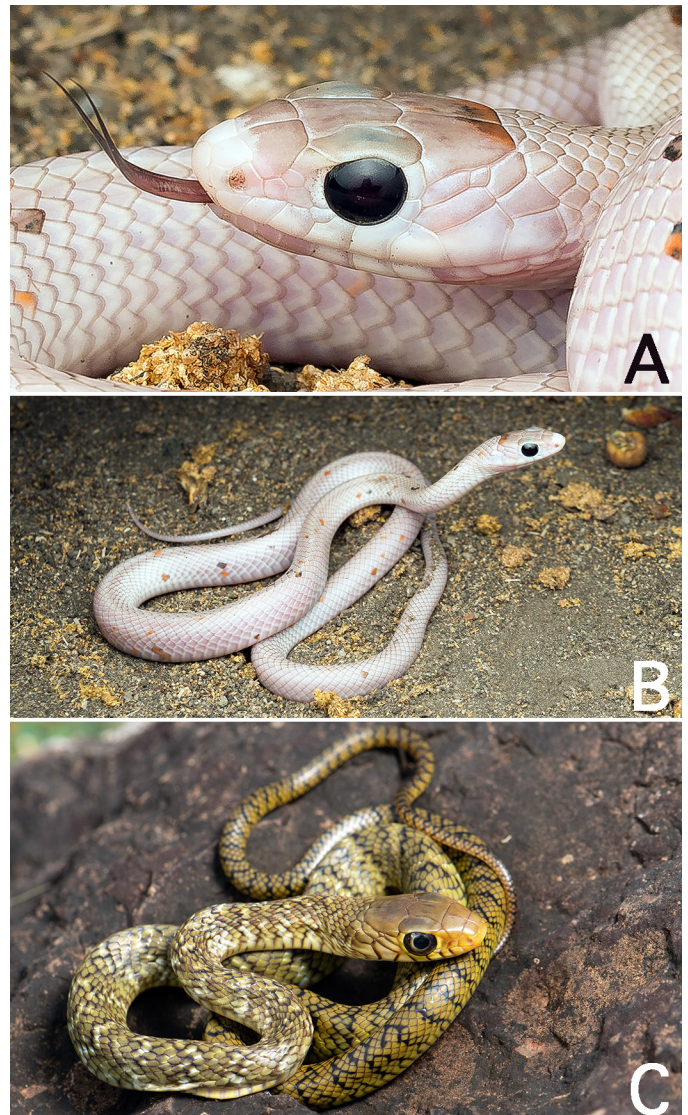


Fig. 1. A leucistic subadult female Indian Ratsnake (*Ptyas mucosa*) from Nagpur, Maharashtra State, India (A & B), and a typically colored Indian Ratsnake (C). Photographs by Girish Choure.

for their help in examining and photographing the snake. We thank Vivek Sharma for providing necessary information and assistance in identifying the snake.

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