



An Albino Spectacled Cobra, *Naja naja* (Linnaeus 1758), from Southwestern Odisha, India

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Albinism is a hereditary condition that is characterized by total or partial loss of pigmentation from skin, hair, scales, feathers, or eyes (Cyril 2009). If the condition affects

melanophores in both skin and eyes (i.e., complete amelanism), such albinos are identified by pinkish-yellowish skin and reddish eyes (Spadola and Insacco 2010). Albinism



Fig. 1. A juvenile albino Spectacled Cobra (*Naja naja*) from Bhawanipatna, Odisha, India (A & B), and a typically colored snake (C & D). Photographs by Biswajit Harpal.

occurs in all vertebrates, including reptiles, although its occurrence in snakes in nature is rare, especially in adults (Ferri and Bettiga 1992). Estimates of the ratio of albinism in wild vertebrates vary from 1:10,000 to 1:30,000 (Bechtel 1995). Albinos often are born dead or malformed and have low survival rates because the associated color defects have negative effects on fitness, feeding, and reproduction (Krečsák 2008).

The Spectacled Cobra (*Naja naja*) is a large (maximum total length to >2 m), venomous, predominantly diurnal elapid that is widely distributed throughout the Indian Subcontinent, where it inhabits a wide variety of habitats including forests and urban areas from sea level to 2,000 m asl (Whitaker and Captain 2008). We herein report an albino *Naja naja* from Bhawanipatna, Kalahandi District, Odisha, India (19.9074°N, 83.1642°E).

While responding to a rescue call on 16 July 2021, Biseswar Sahu encountered a juvenile albino *Naja naja* (SVL = 20 cm, tail length = 4 cm) (Fig. 1). Eyes were red, the body pinkish, and the color of the tongue less intense than in typically colored individuals. After recording basic morphological data, the snake was released into suitable habitat near the site of collection.

Previously published records reported albino Spectacled Cobras in the Indian states of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Uttarakhand (Fellows 2018; Thakur and Trivedi 2018; Maurya et al. 2020). The only prior report from Odisha was a video of a rescue on the Times of India website (Das 2020).

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