



# Xanthism in a Deccan Banded Gecko, *Cyrtodactylus deccanensis* (Günther 1864)

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Excessive and reduced pigmentation are examples of conspicuous deviations from the typical skin color of a given species (Witkop 1975). Skin colors and color patterns in reptiles are extremely variable due to factors that include camouflage, mimicry, warning signals, sexual selection, and thermoregulatory advantages (Norris and Lowe 1964; Bechtel 1978; Stuart-Fox and Ord 2004). The diversity in color patterns of reptiles depend mainly on pigment production of specialized skin cells and their distribution (Bechtel 1978). These pigment-producing cells include xanthophores, erythrophores, iridophores, and melanophores (Morrison et al. 1995; Bagnara and Matsumoto 2006). Xanthophores, typically located in the dermis, are responsible for yellow coloration (Bagnara 1966).

*Cyrtodactylus deccanensis* is distributed in the northern Western Ghats of Maharashtra and Gujarat, India (Uetz et al. 2022). Typical dorsal coloration is reddish-brown with four to five yellow bands and six to eight bands on the tail, all of them with dark brown to black edges (Karthik et al. 2018). Although Karthik et al. (2018) described an unusual pattern in an individual, to date, no reports have documented abnormal coloration in this species.

At 12 April 2014, during an expedition at Kothaligad, Peth, Neral, Maharashtra, India (18.9916°N, 73.512777°E; elev. 642 m asl), we observed an unusually colored gecko that we initially identified as *Cyrtodactylus* sp. However, after closer examination of characters like uniformly dispersed flattened tubercles on dorsal scales, intermixed pholidosis, strongly folded eyelids, and absence of lamellae and bent toes, we identified the species as a xanthic *Cyrtodactylus deccanensis*, noting also that this locality is within the known range of the species (Agarwal and Karanth 2015). After taking photographs, we released the animal where it was initially encountered. Photographs were sent to Akshay Khandekar, who confirmed the identity of the gecko.



**Fig. 1.** Lateral and dorsal views of a xanthic Deccan Banded Gecko (*Cyrtodactylus deccanensis*). Photographs by Mandar Ghumare.

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