



# Aberrant Hood-like Markings on the Posterior Body of a Spectacled Cobra (*Naja naja*)

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The Spectacled Cobra, *Naja naja* (Linnaeus 1758) (Elapidae), is a venomous proteroglyph widely distributed on the Indian Subcontinent, including Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and possibly eastern Afghanistan (Wüster and Thorpe 1992; Wüster 1998; Daniel 2002; Das 2002; Das and de Silva 2005; Wallach et al. 2014; Wüster and Tillack 2023). This species usually sports a binocellate or spectacle-like mark on the dorsal side of the neck that dilates into a hood when the snake is excited or scared (Cuylenberg 1961; Whitaker 1976; Young and Kardong 2010). This hood-mark is typical but not always constant in *N. naja* (Daniel 2002; Das 2002; Whitaker 1976; Whitaker and Captain

2004). We herein report a curious case of aberrant hood-like markings on the posterior body of a *N. naja* from India.

At 0730 h on 14 June 2024, PR rescued a young Spectacled Cobra (Fig. 1) (~400 mm total length) from a house in Mahbubnagar, Telangana, in southern India (16.748, 77.983; 500 m asl). This snake had a typically spectacled hood but also had distinctive hood-like markings on its posterior body. The typical markings were present at the levels of ventral scales 17–23, 28–30, and 35 (forebody and neck), whereas the aberrant hood-like markings were at the levels of ventral scales 116–121, 123–126, 134–143, 152–162, and 178–180 on the posterior body. Eye-spot-



**Figure 1.** A subadult Spectacled Cobra (*Naja naja*) from Mahbubnagar, India, with aberrant hood-like markings on posterior trunk. Snake with hood in ventral (A) and dorsal (B) views; lateral (C) dorsal (D), and ventral (E) views of the posterior trunk bearing the aberrant hood-like markings. Photographs by B. Sadasivaiah.

like markings were present dorsally and wide dark bands reminiscent of the usual neck bands were present ventrally.

A number of studies have addressed variation in hood-markings in this and allied Asiatic cobras (e.g., Mao 1963), and Pattanaargson et al. (1998) even compared venom profiles of Monocled Cobras, *N. kaouthia* Lesson 1831, with typical and atypical hood markings in Thailand. Additional reports (Bannerman 1905, 1907; Khan 1984; Addoor 1993) addressed variations in hood-markings of Indian Spectacled Cobras. However, in all such instances, aberrations were restricted to the dorsal neck region. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first report of hood-like markings elsewhere on the body of a *N. naja*.

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