

SHORT COMMUNICATION

# First report of leucism in *Python molurus molurus* (Serpentes: Pythonidae) from Mangalore, Karnataka, India

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**Palavras-chave:** albinismo parcial, Kuppepdavu, Parque Biológico Pilikula, píton-indiano.

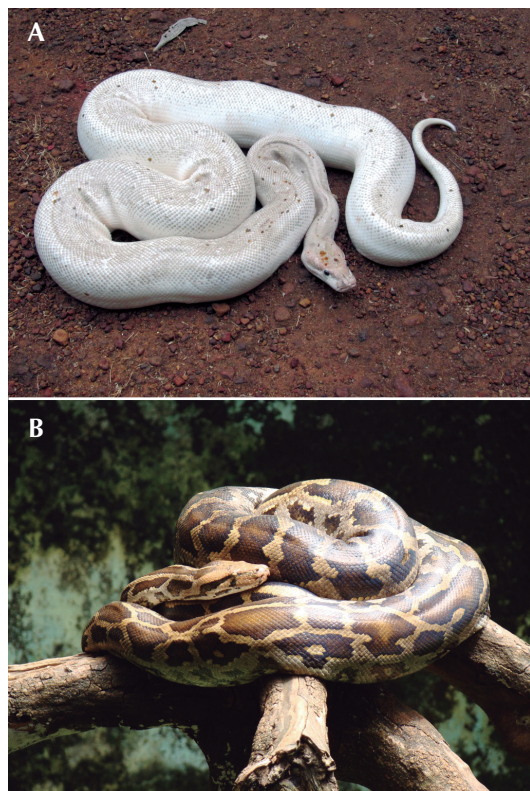
*Python molurus molurus* (Linnaeus, 1758) is found throughout India (except the islands) up to 2000 m above sea level. The Indian Rock Python is a nocturnal snake that inhabits estuarine mangrove forests, arid scrub jungle, rain forests, and grasslands (Whitaker and Captain 2008). It feeds on mammals, birds, and reptiles, but seems to prefer mammals (Daniel 2002). Females lay 8–107 eggs and brood the eggs by coiling around them (Daniel 2002).

Leucism is a form of albinism in which the eyes, legs and beak are normally pigmented, whereas the skin or feathers have either reduced coloration or lack it entirely (Sage 1962). Leucism or partial albinism (McCardle 2012) is controlled by a single recessive allele (Owen and Skimmings 1992), but albinism is caused by several genes (Summers 2009). Inherited color defects, such as albinism and leucism, are well known in several animal species, including

snakes (Bechtel 1995), but wild albino and leucistic animals are rare (Walter 1938), principally because they have low survival rates. An albino python was recorded in West Bengal (Lahiri 1955), and Narayana *et al.* (2016) reported a leucistic Indian Rock Python; however, the python described in that publication has an exceptionally dark pattern, which actually may be a case of axanthism (Bechtel 1995).

On 18 February 2016, we found a white *Python molurus* (Figure 1A) near the road side in jungle habitat in Kuppepdavu, Karnataka, India. Kuppepdavu is a small town, 27 km north of the city of Mangalore. We captured the snake and housed it in Pilikula Biological Park. The white python was identified using keys provided by Daniel (2002) and Whitaker and Captain (2008). The female snake has total length of 1.8 m. Dorsally, the snake is white with small light brown spots on the head. The eye is blue, which indicates that the leucism is the homozygous form of “mojave,” “lesser,” or “russo”, all of which represent incomplete dominant expression of slightly different alleles of the same gene. Normally, *Python molurus molurus* (Figure 1B)

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**Figure 1.** Leucistic (A) and normal (B) Indian Rock Python, *Python molurus molurus*.

is yellowish to brown with asymmetrical dark brown, black edged blotches. The eye is brown.

It is reported that leucism can be inherited and also skip generations if leucistic genes are recessive. The extent and positioning of the loss of pigmentation can vary individually. This leucistic python is being maintained in the captivity at Pilikula Biological Park for observation and breeding along with other normal python. This may possibly throw light on genetic pattern of inheritance if any.

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