Albinism, in general is a rare phenomenon, occurring in vertebrate groups, including mammals. It is due to lack of colour pigmentation resulting from the inability to synthesize the melanin and caused by the absence of dominating allele among the mammals (Smielowski, 1987). Further, he has stated that total albinos are with red coloured eyes.

A study of breeding biology of frogs has been undertaken in northern Maharashtra by the second author (AS) in rainy season. On 8th August 2015, while locating the frogs he suddenly noticed a small spiny animal like hedgehog and very close to it another small spiny but totally white bodied albino (Fig. 1) during night time at Amali village (21°37'42.34'' N & 74°0'11.97''E) in Akkalkuwa taluka of Nandurbar district, Maharastra. The spines of albino were white and eyes were reddish (pinkish due to flash light) as compared to dark eyes of normal animal.

Later on, the normal and albino hedgehogs were identified as Indian Hedgehog, Paraechinus micropus (Blyth, 1846) (Erinaceomorpha: Erinaceidae) by third author (SST) on the basis of photographs and diagnostic characters such as pig-like snout, presence of numerous spines on the body, spines on the forehead divided by a longitudinal naked furrow and small rounded ears (Menon, 2003).

A perusal of pertinent literature revealed that in India, instances of albinism have been reported in various mammals for viz., House Shrew (Khajuria 1983), Blue Bull (Smiełowski 1987), Five-striped Palm Squirrel (Mahabal et al. 2005), Bonnet Macaque (Mahabal et al. 2012), Ruddy Mongoose (Kulkarni & Mahabal 2014), Giant Squirrel and Lesser Bandicoot Rat (Sayed et al. 2014), Tomb Bat (Dhanya et al. 2015). Three species of hedgehogs occurs in India namely: Indian Long-eared or collared Hedgehog, Indian Hedgehog and Bare-bellied Hedgehog (Hutterer, 2005); however, there are no previous instances of albinism reported in these hedgehogs.

Therefore, the present sighting could be the first record of albinism in Indian Hedgehog P. micropus and in the family Erinaceidae from India.

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References


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**Announcement**

**DST-SERB School in Herpetology**

(1-15 October, 2015)

Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun will conduct the 3rd SERB School in Herpetology (Second Phase) for imparting training in various branches of Herpetology. Twenty young researchers from India and five from SAARC countries having aptitude for herpetological research will be selected. Scholars who are MSc. final year, PhD. scholars, postdoctoral fellows or young faculty members may apply. Exceptional candidates without the above mentioned qualifications may also apply. Faculty would be leading researchers in Herpetology from different parts of the country and abroad. The school aims to provide long term scientific human resource with sound technical base for teaching and research programs in Herpetology. For those interested in Herpetology, the school will offer a rare opportunity to learn directly from the leading researchers in the field.


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