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## First record of albino common trinket (*Daudin, 1803*) from Jawai community conservation reserve at Rajasthan, India

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**Abstract**

Common Trinket (*Coelognathus Helena*) is a non-venomous snake species which is commonly found in the Jawai Dam area of Rajasthan and in the entire subcontinent. But albino individual sighting is quite relatively uncommon since their survival rate in the wild is very less to almost none. None the less, from our study site at a farmland (GPS: 25.072759 lat, 73.138657 long) within the Jawai Community Conservation Reserve near Jawai Dam we were fortunate enough to document and rescue an albino Trinket. This is the first ever documented record of albino Trinket snake from the Jawai Dam area of Rajasthan, India.

**Keywords:** Jawai Dam, Trinket snake

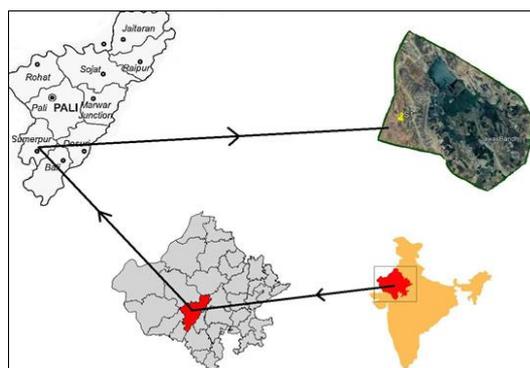
**Introduction**

Melanin is a particular pigment that is present in the epidermis which is responsible for the coloration of skin, hair and eyes. But a particular genetic aberration can decrease the production of melanin, resulting in a condition where skin, hair and eye color becomes lighter. This particular genetic condition is referred to as albinism. It can be either partial, effecting only the eye or can be complete, effecting eyes, hair and skin (Oetting and Adams, 2018; Ebaroto and Richmond, 2021) <sup>[1]</sup>. Usually albino animals or in this regard reptiles have red colored eyes which is actually the presence of blood vessels in the eyes (Leucism vs Albino Reptiles).

Common Trinket snake is quite common in the Indian subcontinent and its occurrence at Jawai Dam of Rajasthan is also very common (Dhawal et. al, 2021) <sup>[10]</sup>. But albino Trinket is comparatively of rare occurrence in the region or as a whole in the country itself. Still records of albino trinket is found from Surat and Nasik in India (Thakur and Trivedi, 2018; Deth and Ranshoor, 1976) <sup>[3,4]</sup>

**Study Site**

Jawai Community Conservation Reserve <sup>[13]</sup> is the surrounding forest cover of Jawai Dam which is constructed over the river Jawai, one of the tributary of Luni River. The forest cover around the dam was declared as Reserve in 2011 (Sharma, 2017) <sup>[11]</sup> since the decision made by the standing committee of Rajasthan Board for Wildlife.



**Fig 1:** Study area (S1) near Jawai Dam at Pali district of Rajasthan, India

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In general, the area of the Reserve is covered by deciduous trees with rough and dusty topography dotted with hills, fragmented grasslands, farmlands and villages. Crevices and caves are often found at the region which makes the place a favorable site for the snakes.



**Fig 2:** Location of the study site

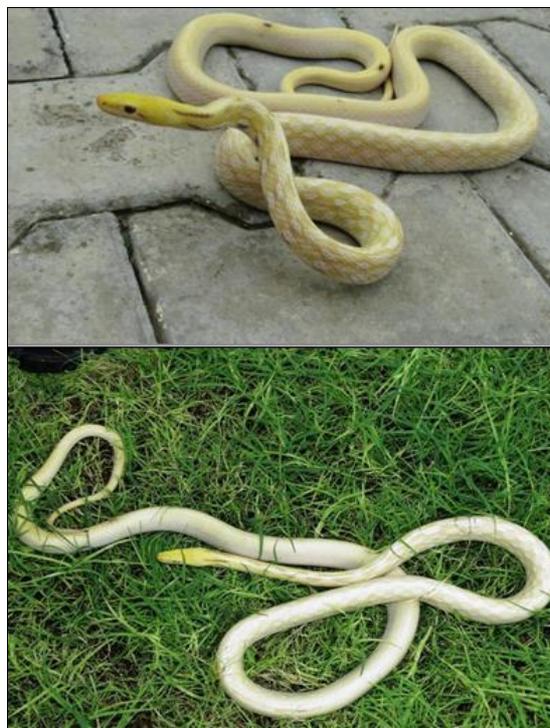
### Methodology

As a part of the SARPA SATHI project initiated from 2019 in the study site, we conduct regular basis monitoring and rescue of snakes from the Jawai Dam area of Pali district in Rajasthan. In one such rescue from a farm near the dam, we recovered and identified the particular albino Common Trinket snake. The identification was done by Omveer Dhawal after taking a photograph of the reptile. The rescue was done on a Saturday afternoon of 13th August, 2022 at around 02:27PM. Morphological Characters: *Coelognathus Helena* (Daudin, 1803), i.e. the common trinket snake belongs to the family Colubridae, which is the largest family of snakes (Colubrid). It is a non-venomous constrictor species which is widely distributed and native to Central Asian countries (The Reptile Database.) Common Trinket has an interesting pattern. First 30-40% of the body consists of a grid pattern of saddles on the back with connect to a pattern on the sides. This pattern continues in longitudinal stripes of a light brown stripe across the back and sides and a dark brown on the dorsal which creates a sharp contrast with the light cream colored ventral scales. The long tail is used for support while climbing. The head is relatively flat and pointed. The eyes are particularly well developed for nocturnal activities and often have a dark line under them. Four distinct longitudinal stripes are present in the neck, two of which runs on top and two on the sides. The color and contrast of the pattern is often more evident in the juveniles, whereas adults are often a lot darker and have comparatively less contrast [8]. An adult trinket snake can attain a length of 4.5 ft, which includes a 25cm long tail (Boulenger GA, 1890) [6].



**Fig 3:** Common Trinket from Jawai (photo by Omveer Dhawal)

Observed Characters: During the rescue, we identified the snake to be a Common Trinket by its physical appearance but the coloration pattern was absurd in the way that the body was completely white with its distinctive grid patterns and the eye color is red—a typical coloration feature noted in an albino individual.



**Fig 4:** Albino Common Trinket from Jawai (photo by Omveer Dhawal)

### Conclusion

Sightings of albino snakes in the wild is quite a rare event, since this trait itself is of quite uncommon occurrence in an individual. This study proves that such rarely occurring individual is present at our study site, only gone unnoticed so far. Apart from that, a vast asset in the herpetology community has been left unexplored till the project Sapra Sathi was implemented in the Jawai area through which we have been collecting data of our monitoring and rescue works to produce scientific documentation.

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