

First photographic record of albino chital with its albino fawn (*Axis axis* Erxleben, 1777) in Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan, India

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The Spotted deer *Axis axis* Erxleben, 1777 is an herbivore belongs to the order Artiodactyla, commonly known as chital. It is the most common among all cervids found in India except Jammu and Kashmir and Himalayas (Menon, 2003). It is an endemic species to South Asia (Schaller, 1967) found in dry deciduous, moist deciduous, thorn forests and mangroves. It is one of the most common prey species for carnivores in forest ecosystem. Albinism is a congenital disorder occurs due to absence of melanin and known to affect all vertebrates. Albinism has been reported in many larger mammals such as tiger (Gee, 1954), nilgai (Ranjithsingh, 1987), sloth bear (Bharos, 1988), gaur (2011) and in small mammals like common mongoose (Tehsin *et al.*, 1994), common palm civet and Northern palm squirrel (Sharma, 2003) in India.

As a part of the project on "Monitoring tigers, co-predators, prey and their habitat" a survey was carried out to enumerate signs of prey and predators during 2012. On 12th January, 2012 at 1359 hrs an albino chital along with its albino fawn were sighted in Pipli deh near Anantpura chawki (Kundera Range, Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve (N 26°05'44.4", E 76°05'45.8"). We observed the albinos by using a pair of Bushnell binoculars (12X40) and took a photograph on the very occasion. They were grazing along with the herd with 18 individuals. This the first record of an albino chital found in dry deciduous and thorn forests. In India, there are quite a few sightings of albino chital that had been recorded in dry (Bandipur, Nagarhole and Pench Tiger Reserves) and moist (Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary) deciduous forests. Though many sightings of albino chital were



Fig. 1 The albino chital along with its albino fawn in Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve

reported in India, sighting of an albino chital along with its albino fawn in thorn forests of Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve is a significant observation.

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