**REPTILE RAP** 



## **GREEN KEELBACK**

# First record of albino *Macropisthodon plumbicolor* from Karnataka



IUCN Red List:

Global – NA

Regional Peninsular India – LC (Srinivasulu et al. 2014)

Young albino Green Keelback snake (A), head portion with red eyes (B) and tail portion (C) of albino Green Keelback M. plumbicolor observed in Halasangi village, Vijaypur, Karnataka, India.

Reptilia [Class of Reptiles]

Squamata [Order of scaled reptiles]

Natricidae [Family of grass snakes]

*Macropisthodon plumbicolor* [Green Keelback]

Species described by Cantor in 1839

*Macropisthodon plumbicolor* is a non-venomous Green Keelback snake found in peninsular India and Sri Lanka especially on the hills rather than on the plains and also found in Bangladesh, Myanmar and Pakistan (Khaire 2010). It is mainly observed in grasslands, forests and also in densely populated cities. Green Keelback snake has stout green body with keeled scales and short tail. Young snakes have a black inverted 'V' mark on head and blue-black bands on the body, which disappears as the snake grows (Khaire 2010). A young albino Green Keelback snake was observed on 21 October 2014



while doing herpeto-faunal survey in the thick vegetation area of Halasangi, Vijaypur. Halasangi Village lies between 15°50–17°28N & 74°54–76°28E and located on 490m in

Indi Tehsil, Vijaypur District, Karnataka State, southern India. Study area receives an annual rainfall of about 578mm from June–October and frequently undergoes drought. The maximum temperature reaches up to 42°C during summer and a minimum temperature of 20°C in winter. The type of vegetation is dry deciduous forest. The snake was collected and brought to the

**Global Distribution** : Endemic to South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka).

study room to record body length, colour pattern, eye and tongue colour. It was identified on the basis of keys and methods suggested by Daniel (2002), Whitaker & Captain (2008), and Khaire (2010). It was later released at the collection site after photography. The total body length of the snake was 95cm. Body color was pale yellow with faint patches and its tongue and eyes were completely red in colour. This snake was active and showed aggressive behavior while handling.

Previous studies have revealed number of instances of incomplete albinism to complete albinism in Indian snake species (Lahiri 1955; Whitaker 1971; Basu et al. 2003; Cyril 2009; Vyas 2012, 2013; Vyas et al. 2012; Sayyed 2012; Hoshing et al. 2013; Jadhav & Mahabal 2014; Bhutkar & Mahabal 2014; Adimallaiah & Vyas 2015; Kumbar et al. 2016). Recently, Mahabal & Thakur (2014) thoroughly reviewed aberrant morphs and color patterns of Indian reptilian species.

Albinism is a congenital disorder in animals and occurs in a variety of forms, ranging from partial albinism to complete albinism. The condition is caused when a recessive gene from each parent is passed on to the offspring. The pure albino snakes are fully pink, white or yellow bodied and that the partial albinos have small patches of white on its body (Cyril 2009). Many herpetologists have observed complete albinism in Green Keelback snake *M. plumbicolor* in different locations of Maharashtra State for instance. Sayyed et al. (2012) observed albino female Green Keelbacks in Satara District in 2007 and 2009 and male albino keelback in Satara District in 2012. Hoshing et al. (2013) have seen an albino keelback at Islampur and Pune, Bhutekar & Mahabal (2014) recorded albino keelback in Pune District of Maharashtra. Hussain et al. (2016) have observed leucism in green keelback in Amravati District, Maharashtra. There were no single reports on partial or complete albino green keelback from other states except Maharashtra. Further, recent review of Mahabal & Thakur (2014) reported that highest aberrant morph and patterns were more frequently observed in this species after the Sand Boa *Gongylophis conicus* in Indian region. Similarly, Sazima & Di-Bernardo (1991) stated that albinism is more frequent in

nocturnal Sand Boa.



This is a first report from the Vijaypur District, Karnataka state on albino Green Keelback *M. plumbicolor*. Shivakumar (2012) had sighted a Checkered Keelback snake, *Xenochrophis piscator* (Schneider, 1799) in Mysore, Karnataka.

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### Suresh M. Kumbar<sup>1</sup>, Abhijit B. Ghadage<sup>2</sup> & Satyawan S. Patil<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1-3</sup>Department of Zoology, Arts, Commerce and Science College, Palus, Sangli District, Maharashtra, India. Email: <sup>1</sup>smkumbar@rediffmail.com