

First record of erythrism in *Eutropis cf macularia* from Vadodara, Gujarat



Image 1. Individual of *Eutropis cf. macularia* photographed from the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda showing erythrism. © Nikunj Jambu.

In reptiles, eight different types of colour aberrations have been described. The most common are albinism, leucism or melanism, and rare are amelanism, axanthism, erythrism, hypomelanism or piebaldism (Bechtel 1995), although their nomenclature is not consensual. Erythrism is defined as naturally occurring colour condition of animals with excessive production and deposition of red and orange pigments (erythrophores) with various shades and degrees of intensity (Gilhen 2010; Moore & Ouellet 2014).

During May 2010, while setting up posters during a science fair near Memorial Library of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, I came across a skink with strange colouration. Not knowing much details about it, I just photographed the individual with Samsung marine phone (1.3 megapixel camera). The individual was not handled

and examined. The skink species was later identified to be belonging possibly to *Eutropis macularia* complex (Bronze Grass Skink) from the photograph after ruling out other *Eutropis* species occurring in the area. A typical *Eutropis macularia* individual will show deep-brown, olive or bronze-brown in colour; dorso-lateral bands light or yellow; sometimes with black spots on the base of the tail.

Breeding males have orange colour on the lateral side of the body and head. Juveniles are grey with a bronze head (Das & Das 2017) (Image 2). The photographed individual seems to be showing erythrism (Image 1) evident by extreme reddish colouration across the body and lack of other colouration belonging to any sex or age group (breeding and non-breeding) (Image 2). I have never come across any individual of *Eutropis macularia* complex over years across the

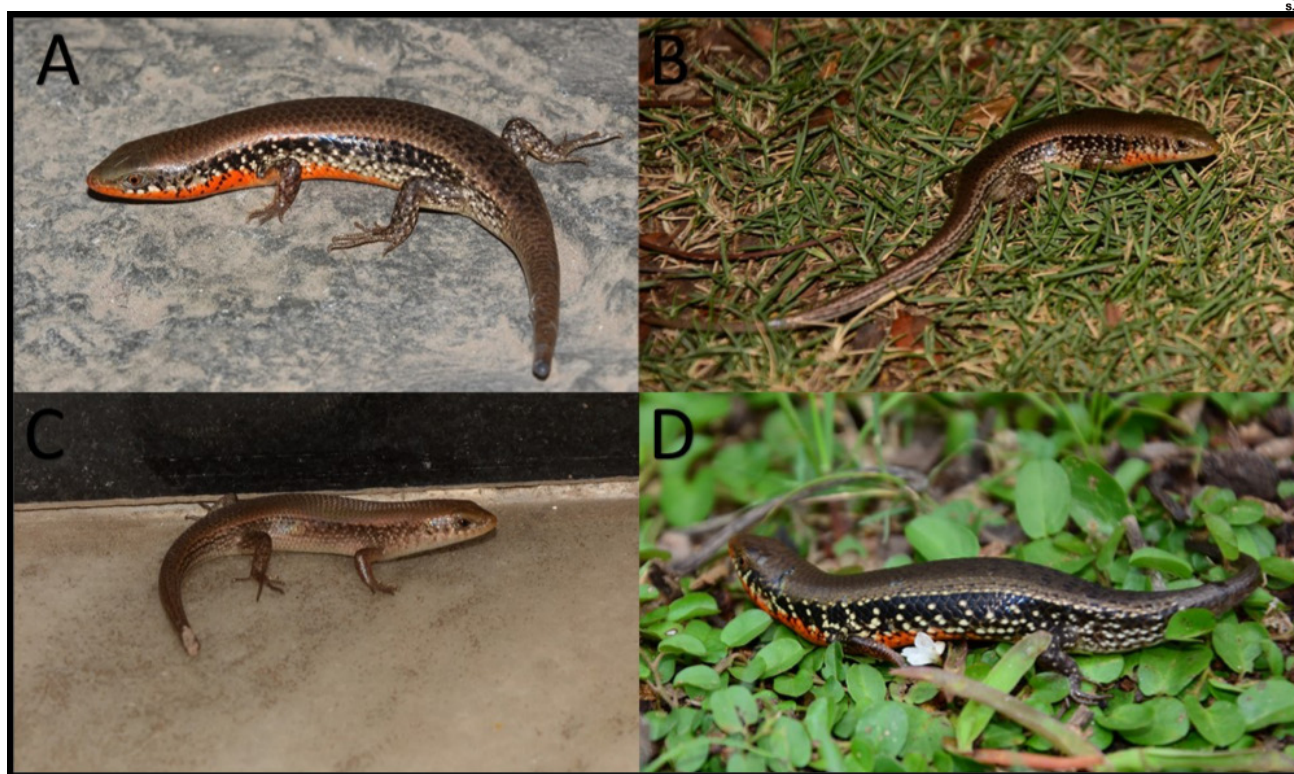


Image 2. Typical colouration shown by *Eutropis macularia* complex: A—individual from Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary (© Harshil Patel) | B—individual from Bhat, Jambughoda Wildlife Sanctuary | C—individual from Halol, Panchmahals | D—individual from Kada Dam, Jambughoda Wildlife Sanctuary (© B,C,D Maitry Jani).

country showing such colour aberration. Maèát et al. (2016) describes erythrism as one of the rarest aberration in Palaearctic snakes. Although, there are handful of reports of erythrism in reptiles across world, there seems to be no published record of erythrism in reptiles from India. This forms a very important and first record of erythrism in *Eutropis cf. macularia* from India.

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Nikunj Jambu

A/5, Sainath Society, B/h Yash Complex, Gotri Road, Vadodara, Gujarat 390021, India. Email: jambu.nikunj@gmail.com

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