



First record of an albino Five-striped Palm Squirrel from Dehradun, Uttarakhand



Image 1. Five-striped Palm Squirrel: A—sub-adult albino on the trunk of a mango tree | B— a clear red eye is visible | C—two normal squirrels along with the albino.

The Five-striped Palm Squirrel *Funambulus pennantii* (Wroughton, 1905) is a resident of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Bangladesh, and Nepal (Molur et al. 2005). On 03 October 2020, we noticed a sub-adult white Five-striped Palm Squirrel in the lawn of our house (Images 1A,B,C).

Albinism is defined as a hypo-pigmentary disorder where there is a total absence of melanin in skin, eyes and hairs because the functional tyrosinase enzyme is heritably absent in the animal's pigment cells. This affects the hairs and skin and results in a condition of red eyes and pure white plumage or fur. The albinism is caused by the inheritance of autosomal recessive gene in animal species (Hale et al. 2005; van Grouw

2013). The above characteristics described for albinism were found in our observation.

The Five-striped Palm Squirrel pairs breed and litter in a nest made on an false Ashoka tree *Monoon longifolium* in our garden (30.274644 N, 77.994867 E) from 2017. This year, four babies, including this albino, were born. The nest is situated approximately 14 feet above the ground.

Since 1886 only six published records representing a total of seven albino *Funambulus pennantii* have been found in India (Mahabal et al. 2019), one female from Gujarat (Newnham 1886; Mahabal et al. 2019), one female from Chandigarh (Chaturvedi & Ghose 1984), one sub-adult



from Udaipur, Rajasthan (Sharma 2004), one adult and one young from Deogarh Fort, Maharashtra (Mahabal et al. 2005), two adults from Udaipur, Rajasthan (Mehra et al. 2007, 2010). This record of albino *Funambulus pennantii* from Dehradun is a first from Uttarakhand, India.

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