

First record of piebaldism in Wild Boar from India

The Wild Boar *Sus scrofa* Linnaeus, 1758 (Artiodactyla: Suidae) is widely distributed throughout the country. It has a large mane which runs in a crest along its back from its head to lower body. Colour is generally black, more or less mixed with rusty brown or whitish. It inhabits the grassy or scanty bushy areas in forest or nearby the villages or towns.



Herd of Wild Boars. © Rishikesh Lande.

In mammals, a wide variety of colours and forms are found as a result of the presence of the colour pigment melanin, which provides colour to the skin, hair and eyes. There are two forms of melanin: eumelanin and pheomelanin (Lubnow 1963). Both these pigments together can give a wide range of grayish-brown colours (Lubnow 1963; van Grouw 2013).

A Wild Boar *Sus scrofa* with colour aberration was seen in a grassland some 15 km north (19.1884N, 74.6957E) of the Ahmednagar City, Maharashtra, which is a potential site for raptors and other mammals (including Leopards). It was on 30 January 2023 evening (at 0618 h), while observing and photographing birds from the grassland, that the second

author photographed a herd of 20+ wild boars roaming in the grassland, and was wondered to see one of the boars with narrow white colour band running laterally downwards from the nape to the toes of the forelimb. A few boars were scavenging on carcass of a cow in open ground. He took many photographs of the herd and the individual with colour aberration. Initially, we thought this could be a feral pig mixed with the herd of wild boar, but after scanning



A Wild Boar with white colour band. © Rishikesh Lande.



Wild Boars feeding on carcass of a cow. ©Rishikesh Lande.

the photographs keenly and confirming the same from the experts, we concluded that this is a case of pigmentation disorder in the Wild Boar.

Pigmentation disorders or colour aberrations have been observed in almost every vertebrate species on earth. Earlier, van Grouw (2013) introduced a uniform system of naming colour aberrations in birds. He described and named six most common heritable colour aberrations in birds by their pigment reductions (gene actions).

Later, Mahabal et al. (2016) also provided the similar identification key for naming colour aberrations in Indian birds. Both the above mentioned keys focus on the birds. Mahabal et al. (2019) provided the colour aberration identification key for mammals. According to this key, the observed Wild Boar is an excellent example of piebaldism, where the absence of colour pigment is clearly seen at a localized area (from nape to the fore limb toes) and also have normal coloured eyes. This case is similar to leucism but differs in that the melanocyte development is only locally disrupted.

In India, 55 mammalian species belonging to eight orders and 19 families show colour

aberrations, from which only two cases (Sinha 1946; Neginhal 2005) are of albinism in Wild Boars *Sus scrofa* from Rajasthan and Karnataka respectively (Mahabal et al. 2019). Recently, Samson et al. (2021) also reported an albino Wild Boar *Sus scrofa* from Tamil Nadu. Considering all these, this could be the first record of piebaldism in Wild Boar from India.

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