



First record of albinism in the Indian Palm Squirrel *Funambulus palmarum* from Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Albino animals are extremely rare in the world. Colour morphs in mammals, including albinism, leucism, and melanism, are uncommon in the wild and are a result of genetic mutations affecting the pigmentation of the animal. Albinism is the complete absence of melanin in the body (Oetting & Adams 2018). The Indian Palm Squirrel *Funambulus palmarum* is a common rodent species in southern India and is widely adapted to urban and rural environments (De, K. 2025).

On 13 September 2025 at Arignar Anna Zoological Park (AAZP), Vandalur, inside the Nilgiri Langur enclosure (12.8797° N, 80.0840° E), I observed an albino Indian Palm Squirrel. The squirrel exhibited a uniform white coat and reddish eyes, characteristics diagnostic of albinism. It was actively climbing a tree during the daytime, at 1102 h inside the enclosure. Only a single individual was observed. The sighting lasted



An albino Indian Palm Squirrel *Funambulus palmarum* was observed at Arignar Anna Zoological Park. © S. Jeswin.



approximately 20 minutes, during which photographic evidence was recorded. This record represents the first such observation from Chennai.

The squirrel's activity and movements were similar to normal conspecifics. No other albino individuals were observed in the vicinity.

Albinism is a rare genetic condition in wild mammals due to reduced survival against predators and lower fitness. Although *Funambulus palmarum* is widely distributed and abundant across southern India, reports of leucism had been recorded (Samson et al. 2017). Report of albinism in *F. tristriatus* was documented by Sayyed et al. (2015). But albinism in *F. palmarum* is extremely rare. The survival of these individuals is low due to poor camouflage capability (Stephenson et al. 2022). However, the persistence of this albino squirrel in an urban habitat suggests reduced predation pressure in the zoo setting (Cosentino et al. 2023). This is the first photographic evidence of albinism in *F. palmarum* in city fauna. These are documented for the science enthusiasts to get fascinated about learning genetics and colour morph variations in common urban wildlife.

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- S. Jeswin**
The Gandhigram Rural Institute (DBTU), Dindigul, Tamil Nadu 624302, India.
Email: sjeswin17@gmail.com
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