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THE BLACK DRONGO'S (*DICRURUS MACROCERCUS* (BECHSTEIN)) WHITE CROWN

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The Black Drongo (*Dicrurus adsimilis* (Bechstein)) or the King Crow belongs to the family Dicruridae. It is a common resident bird seen all over India. It inhabits open deciduous forests and cultivated lands.

A Black Drongo was noticed residing near the Kerala Agricultural University campus in October 1999, in a rice field and deserves special mention. The body size and the colour were same as that of other Black Drongos, but the head had a prominent white round patch at the top. The feathers at the top of the head were striking white giving a complete contrast, resembling a crown. The patch did not extend down up to the eyes of the bird. The bird was an adult and the two white spots on the sides of the bill were prominent. The bird was noticed perching on the tip of busstops, electric cables, and its feeding pattern was same as that of the other Black Drongos. The rice fields provided a feast of insects for the bird. This bird made attempts to chase and attack crows, kites, etc, flying through the locality as other Black Drongos do. This Drongo is resident, according to the local people.

The white patch was seen on the top of the head only, and the rest of the body remained jet black. This cannot be considered as albinism where the whole body becomes white due to the lack of pigment production. There are no previous records of the Drongo's albinism or 'a Black Drongo with a white patch' but in many other birds and animals, albinism has been reported. The present case may be considered as a freak of nature.

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