

## First sighting record of albino Spectacled cobra *Naja naja* (Linnaeus, 1758) from Uttarakhand, India

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**ABSTRACT:** The present communication deals with the first time sighting of four albino Spectacled Cobras, *Naja naja* (Linnaeus, 1758) from Haldwani (Nainital district) in Kumaon division and the state of Uttarakhand as a whole.

**Keywords:** Albino, *Naja naja*, new record, Uttarakhand.

### INTRODUCTION

In India, 860 species of herpetofauna exist, out of which, 518 species of reptiles which include three species of crocodiles, 34 species of turtles and tortoises, 202 species of lizards, and 279 species of snakes belonging to 28 families are there. Of the 518 species of reptiles found in India, nearly 192 species are endemic to India (Kanaujia *et al.*, 2017).

Albinism is a genetically inherited condition and its results either in partial or complete loss of coloration from the skin, hair, scales, feathers or eyes (Hiler, 1983), and scales as in fishes and reptiles. The true albinos are generally recognized by their pinkish-yellowish body colour and reddish eyes in life. The sightings of albino wild animals are sometimes published in newspapers in different parts of India. Albinism, though rare in Snakes, is found in old individuals in nature. Earlier, it was recorded in Spectacled Cobra from Sehore district in Madhya Pradesh (Fellows, 2018). Some snakes are often recorded only by a single or rather few specimens, as regards albinism. However, the data of albinism in animals, especially snakes, is scarce.

### STUDY SITE: HALDWANI

**Physiography:** Haldwani lies in district Nainital, Kumaon division, Uttarakhand. It is located in the Bhabar region in the Himalayan foothills on the banks of the Gaula River at 29.22°N 79.52°E with an average elevation of 424 m above sea level. The city has an area of 44.11 km<sup>2</sup>, including both hilly and flat ground.

**Climate:** Maximum average temperature 37°C in May and the minimum 7.8°C in January. Average annual rainfall 2,095 mm with maximum during July-August.

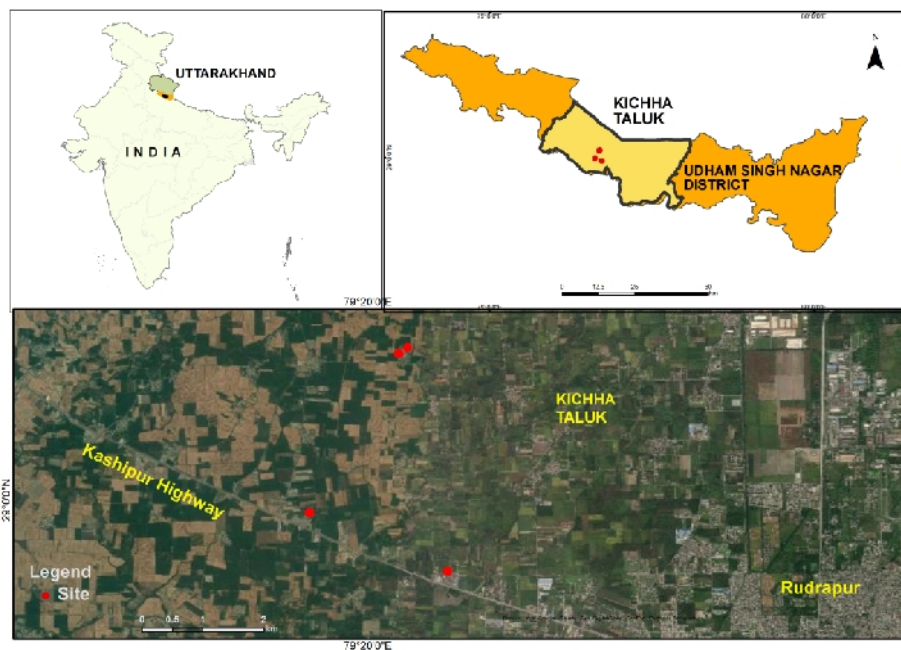
**Flora:** The vegetation around site is generally dominated by *Bauhinia variegata*, *Cassia fistula*, *Bauhinia variegata*, *Mangifera indica*, *Spondias pinnata* and *Tamarindus indica*.

### OBSERVATIONS

Present study is based on observations, encounters as well as random search for snakes in different locations (Chitranganpur, Dineshpur, Jafrapur and Sampatpur) during June/September in the years 2014, 2015 and 2018 (Table 1) and sighted Albino Cobras, both young and adult, for the first time from the area and the state of Uttarakhand and recorded here. These specimens were found in human-dominated areas with agriculture fields and water bodies.

**Table 1: Sighting Albino Cobras (*Naja naja*) in different areas around Haldwani (Nainital distt., Uttarakhand).**

S. No.	Year (June/Sept.)	Locality	Specimen	Body length (approx.)	Sex
1.	2014	Sampatpur	Live	30 cm	unidentified
2.	2015	Dineshpur	Live	45 cm	unidentified
3.	2018	Chitranganpur	Live	1.65 m	male
4.	2018	Jafrapur	Live	1.20 m	male



**Fig. 1.** Maps of the sighting locations.



**Fig. 2.** Photograph of some albino Cobras, *Naja naja*.

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