

Documentation of an Albino Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* near Godavari River in Nanded, Maharashtra, India

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ABSTRACT

An apparently albino Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*) was observed along the banks of the Godavari River near Belur (Bk), Taluka Dharmabad, District Nanded, Maharashtra. The bird displayed a complete loss of melanin, including pinkish eyes, a pale bill, and entirely white plumage. This is a report from the Godavari basin in Maharashtra, contributing to the limited documentation of albinism in waders.

Keywords: Albinism, Little Ringed Plover, *Charadrius dubius*, Godavari River, Albinism in birds, Birds of Maharashtra, Genetic abnormality

INTRODUCTION

The Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*) is a resident and local migrant bird species across India. This species is particularly associated with riverbanks, reservoirs, wetlands, mudflats, and sandy shores (Grimmett et al. 2011). They feed mainly on small invertebrates such as insects, larvae, worms, and crustaceans (Snow & Perrins, 1998). Albinism and leucism are pigmentation anomalies in birds resulting from genetic or developmental defects in melanin production (Sage 1962). Albinism in avifauna is caused by autosomal recessive mutations that disrupt the enzyme tyrosinase, which is critical in the melanin production pathway (Fox & Vevers 1960; Van Grouw 2013).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The bird was observed along an open riverbank with shallow pools and an exposed sandy stretch of the Godavari River near Belur (Bk) (18.857° N, 77.893° E) on 19th October 2025 at 0810 hrs. Observation was made with Nikon 8×42 binoculars and Canon PowerShot SX70

HS 20.3 MP Digital Camera with 65x Optical Zoom. Bird was observed for 20 minutes and field notes were written immediately after the sighting and photographs were taken. The identification of the species was confirmed through morphological characters such as size and shape and “run-stop-peck” foraging behaviour (Snow & Perrins 1998).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A single individual resembling *Charadrius dubius* was seen foraging on the open riverbank along with two normal Little Ringed Plovers. The individual was entirely white, lacking the characteristic brown upperparts and black breast band. Eyes appeared pinkish-red, legs and bill were pale pink. All indicating a complete absence of melanin, consistent with albinism rather than leucism (Kasambe et al. 2021; Van Grouw 2013). Such findings are of interest because they may affect survival and reproductive success (Jehl, 1985). Partial or complete albinism in wild birds is uncommon, with an estimated frequency of less than 1 in 30,000 individuals (Gross 1965). The occurrence of an albino *Charadrius dubius* from Maharashtra extends the known distribution of such pigment anomalies in waders to the Godavari basin. Earlier records of a leucistic individual of this species from West Bengal (Nayak 2023) and from Chennai (Chennai Bird Photographers 2019).

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Figure 1. Albino Little ringed plover (*Charadrius dubius*) on Godavari River bank



Figure 2. Same individual with different angle



Figure 3. Little ringed plover (Normal individual)

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