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PARTIAL ALBINISM IN HOUSE CROW (*CORVUS SPLENDENS*) AT BASWAPUR VILLAGE OF NIZAMABAD DISTRICT, TELANGANA

Surender G*, Sravan kumar R, Swamy K, Naresh B and Vasudeva Rao V

All India Network project on Agricultural ornithology, Prof. Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad – 500030, India.

Corresponding Author:- **Surender G**
E-mail: suri.wildlife2009@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT
Albinism is a genetically inherited condition that reduces the amount of melanin pigment produced in the body, feathers and eyes of birds. Albinism is caused by a mutation in genes that interfere in the expression of the type and concentration of a pigment. In birds, this alteration causes the absence of colour in the feathers and other body parts and occurs at a very low frequency (Buckley,1982; Beltzer, 1984 and Avizanda *et al*., 2010). Due to the lack of melanin production in both the retinal pigmented epithelium (RPE) and iris, albinos typically have red eyes. In contrast, other alterations in the plumage pigmentation, such as leucism, result from defects in pigment cells in the feathers during development.

INTRODUCTION

The ornithological literature is quite confusing regarding definitions of leucism and various states of albinism. Albinism has been reported in birds by various authors [1-10].

Albinism refers to birds which have some or all of the pigmentation lacking in their plumage and are therefore partly or fully white. True albinos are deficient in colours not only in their plumage but also in the soft parts such as the bill and feet, and the eyes are mostly pink. However, this condition is somewhat rare and many reported albinos have normal eye, bill and leg coloration and considered as Partial albinos. Partial albinism may occasionally be caused by the failure of pigmentation to reach certain feathers as they are growing, perhaps because of a blocked gland. Shock, unbalanced diet, disease or injury is all further possible factors in causing albinism. Partial albinos out number pure albinos 2:1, but together they form only a tiny proportion of wild birds. They are generally conspicuous and therefore more likely to fall victim to predators, and in many cases; where the defect is other than genetic and they will also be less robust than normal birds [11-15].

In the present study, a field survey for avian fauna related to various agricultural crops at Baswapur village (18.167092 78.425305), Nizamabad District of Telangana state was undertaken on 27th October 2014. During the study, spotted a flock of House crows (*Corvus splendens*) and Jungle crows (*Corvus macrorhincus*) were observed in a fallow land away from a distance of 25 mts from the fixed transect. Their fretful calls had drawn our attention where they were feeding on chicken wastage left behind. During our observation, among the flock of 21 House crows one individual was observed to be feeding alone at a startled distance from the other crows and with the intrusion of stray dogs, the startled crow reached a tree branch (Plate 2, a & b). During its flight, the bird was observed to have abnormal colour pattern on the body. After an hour of observation it was confirmed that the species is a House crow inherited with albinism. Based on the morphological features the individual have white patches on the left wing and tail region which are not

common among the individual of House crow (Plate 2, c & d). Using Nikon DSLR D90, the activity of bird was recorded till it disappears from the location. On the basis of field observations and photographic evidences it is assumed that the individual observed to have a partial albinism. Though albinism is common among various birds, there was no report on the albinism of House crow. This is the first report from Telangana state.

Field observations

Some of the following characters were noted in the albino House crow. The primaries on left wing are with white patch and the tail feathers are also with a white patch in colour. Eyes and beak are in normal colour. However, the characters of the bird observed are partial white in colour. It clearly indicates the bird observed during the present observation is a partial albino.

Plate 1. Map showing location of the study area, Baswapur village, Nizamabad District, Telangana State, India

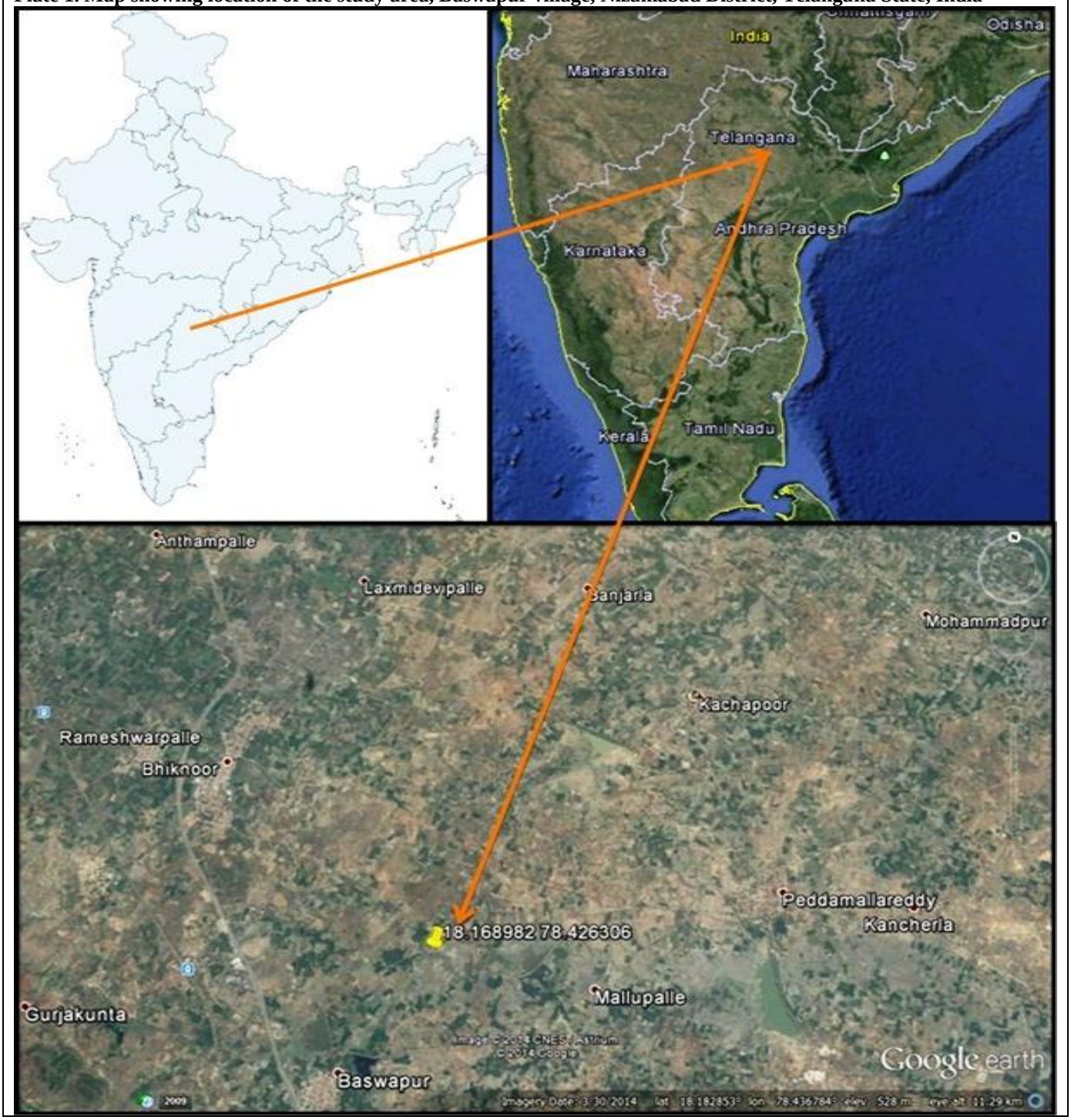

Plate 2. House crow inherited with characters of albinism

a, Partial albino observed distinctive among the flock of House crows
b, Startled flying pattern of Albino house crow
c & d, Pattern of albinism inheritance in the House crow during flight.

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