Contents lists available at Curevita Journals

Frontiers in Environmental Revolutionary Innovation

First Record of a Leucistic Indian Pied Starling (*Gracupica contra*) from Keonjhar, Odisha, India

Anil Sarsavan[1] Satish Kumar Sharam[2] and Manohar Pawar[1]

[1]Foundation for Ecological Security, Jahangirpura, Hadgud, District -Anand, Gujarat, India- 388 370
[2]14-15, Chakriya Amba, Rampura Chouraha, Jhadol Road, Udaipur- 313004, Rajasthan, India.

Articalinfo

Article history: Received 22 June 2025, Revised 18 July 2025, Accepted 6 Aug 2025

Keywords: First Record, Leucism, Indian Pied Starling, Keonjhar, Odisha.

Corresponding author: Manohar Pawar, Foundation for Ecological Security, Jahangirpura, Hadgud, District -Anand, Gujarat, India- 388 370
E-mail: pawarmanohar1988@gmail.com

Citation: Sarsavan Anil, Sharam Satish Kumar and Pawar Manohar .2025.First Record of a Leucistic Indian Pied Starling (*Gracupica contra*) from Keonjhar, Odisha, India.Frontiers in Environmental Revolutionary Innovation. 1,1,52-57.

Publisher: Curevita Research Pvt Ltd

Abstract- We report a leucistic Indian Pied Starling (*Gracupica contra*) observed in Keonjhar District, Odisha, India. In contrast to albinism, the individual's large white feathers and preserved black soft-part pigmentation (normal eye and bill) were consistent with leucism, a partial loss of melanin deposition. According to the published record, this is one of the few reports of leucism in *G. contra* from eastern India and the first recorded case from Keonjhar. In addition to field documentation and a brief differential diagnosis that distinguishes leucism from albinism and progressive greying, this note also addresses the potential ecological and conservation significance of these pigment abnormalities.

Introduction

The Indian Pied Starling (*Gracupica contra*) is a widespread, mostly resident bird that can be found in open land, agricultural mosaics, and human settlements throughout the Indo-Gangetic plains and eastern India. Despite its prevalence, there aren't many confirmed instances of pigment defects in this species in the literature. The significance of these records is highlighted by the widespread presence of aberrant plumage, which is thought to account for more than 1% of all bird populations (Sage 1963). Leucism in the Greater Coucal (Alby et al. 2023) and Coppersmith Barbet (Gayen et al. 2022), brown, albino, melanistic, ino, and leucistic plumage in the House Sparrow (Grouw 2012, Gokulakrishnan et al. 2019), and other examples of such aberrations have been documented in the avian world, providing insight into the intricate mechanisms that govern the appearance of birds. We document a leucistic G. contra from Keonjhar, Odisha, here, highlighting the importance of regular field documentation and broadening the spatial scope of such observations.

Methods

We surveyed birds in Keonjhar district, found a group of Indian Pied Starling. While observing, an individual appeared different from others. Photographs were taken to confirm species identification (Grimmett et al. 2011). Based on appearance, we categorized colour aberrations in plumage following van Grouw (2013).

Results and discussion

On 17 December 2024, while birding in Keonjhar in Odisha, an interesting bird was encountered in the Samantaraypur Sasan area (21.62ºN,

85.59ºE) of the city. Many small flocks of Indian Pied Starling (*Gracupica contra*) were busy feeding on the wet area of having sparse vegetation. At about 1630 h we spotted a lucistic adult Indian Pied Starling feeding on the ground with its flock. The overall body of the bird was predominantly white with a dirty-blackish cap, black primaries and black tail. The throat and back were also white in color. The basal parts of the upper and lower mandibles were orange, but the distal parts were whitish. Skin around the eyes was orange and the eyes were of reddish color. Its legs were pale-pinkish. We observed it for nearly ten minutes and had the opportunity to take several photographs of the bird on the ground. Once it perched on a wall of a nearby house, also. While sitting on the wall, it was quite vocal (Fig. 1).

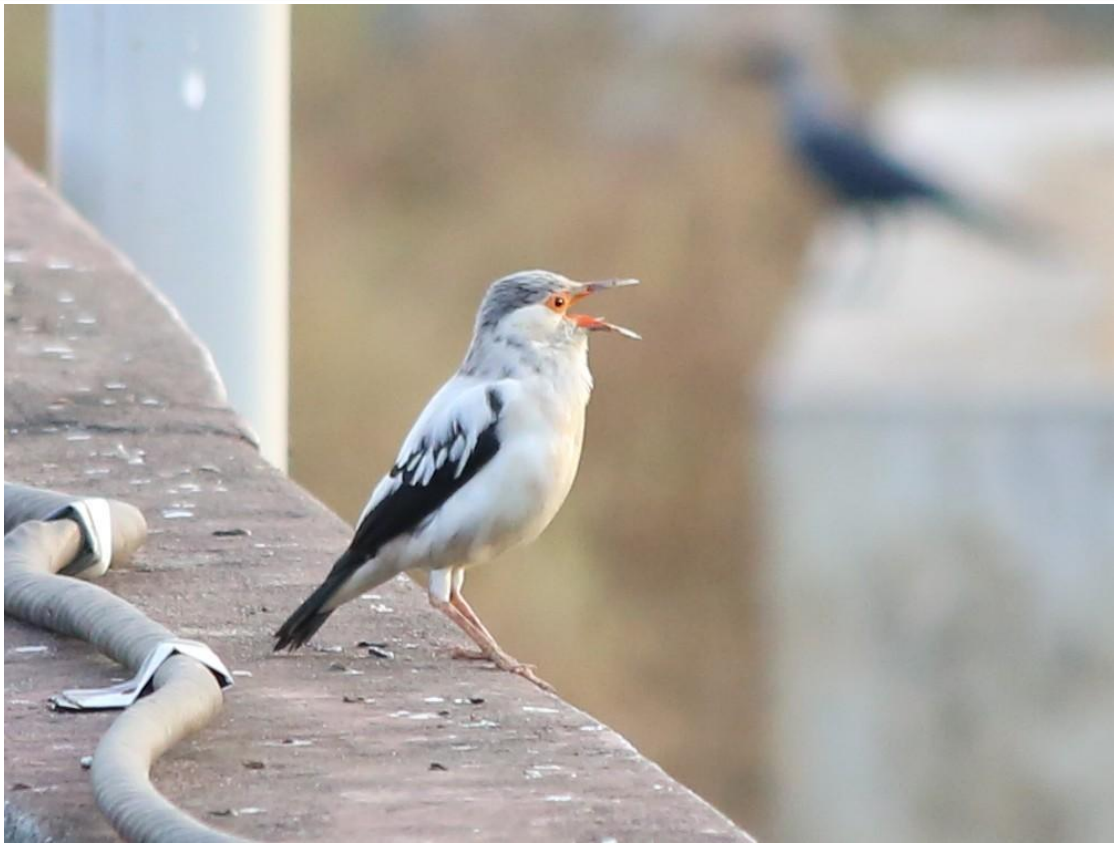

Fig.1: Lucistic Indian Pied Starling at Keonjhar.

An individual with brown aberrant plumage was observed and documented by Jangir (2023) in Rajasthan. An albino Indian Pied Starling was observed by Sharma (2001) in Jamshedpur in Jharkhand. The bird we observed in Keonjhar is a leucistic individual. It retained some original features like the black tail and black primaries, but its overall appearance was predominantly white. The white color prominent on the body, including the neck band and the black color of feathers is also lacking. The changes in colors were such that it was hard to recognize as an Indian Pied Starling.

The present record seems the third record from India, hence worth placing in the records. The changes

were such that the color patterns were hardly recognizable. This can be because melanin pigments are absent in those individuals.

Conclusion

In the wild, birds with these kinds of colour abnormalities suffer greatly and are more vulnerable to predation; these aberrant circumstances may increase their susceptibility to cause feather deterioration, which can also make flying more difficult (Harrison 1985). Furthermore, it has been noted that these individuals with colour abnormalities are occasionally harassed by their conspecifics and may not be accepted by their possible mate (Smith & Rios 2017). Although we were only able to examine individuals, we were unable to investigate whether the other conditions applied to the individuals we saw as well.

References

Alby, M. J., Ashwin, C. P. & Arjun, M. S. 2023. A photographic record of partial leucism in Greater Coucal (Stephens, 1815) (Cuculiformes: Cuculidae) from Chhattisgarh, India. – Ornis Hungarica 31(1): 197–201. DOI: 10.2478/orhu-2023-0013.

Jangir D. K., Choudhary, R., Sharma, V. & Dutta S. 2023. First record of brown plumage aberration in Indian Pied Starling (Gracupica contra) from India. Ornis Hungarica 31(2): 165-167.

Gayen, D., Roy, S., Adhurya, S., Singhamahapatra, A., Seal, S. & Dutta, A. 2022. "Leucism

resulting in xanthochroism" – A report on colour aberration in Coppersmith Barbet Psilopogon

haemacephalus from Asia. – Ornis Hungarica 30(1): 69–79. DOI: 10.2478/orhu-2022-0005.

Gokulakrishnan, G., Sivaperuman, C. & Narayana, B. L. 2019. First records of leucistic House Sparrows (Passer domesticus) in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India. – International Studies on Sparrows 43: 12–14.

Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C. & Inskipp, T. 2011. Birds of the Indian Subcontinent, 2nd ed. – London: Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm, pp. 1–528.

Harrison, C. J. O. 1985. Plumage, abnormal. – In: Campbell, B. & Lack, E. (eds.) A Dictionary of Birds. Staffordshire, England, pp. 472-474.

Sage, B. L. 1963. The incidence of albinism and melanism in British birds. – British Birds 56(11): 409–416.

Sharma, A. 2001. Sighting of an albino Asian Pied Starling (Sturnus contra) at Jamshedpur City. Newsletter for Birdwatchers 41 (4): 55.

Smith, P. & Rios, S. D. 2017. Novel plumage aberrations in Paraguayan non-Passerine birds, and the definition of a new plumage aberration unique to

Psittacidae. Biodiversity and Natural History 3(1): 24–28.

Van Grouw, H. V. *2012.* What colour is that sparrow? A case study: colour aberrations in the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*. – International Studies on Sparrows 36: 30–55.

Van Grouw, H. 2013. "What Colour is that Bird: The Causes and Recognition of Common Colour Aberrations in Birds. British Birds 106: 17–29.