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### FIRST RECORDS OF LEUCISTIC HOUSE SPARROWS (*PASSER DOMESTICUS*) IN THE ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS, INDIA

The House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* is a small member of the family Passeridae and commonly found in many parts of the world (Ali and Ripley 2001). Unusual plumage colouration has been described in detail in this species (Van Grouw 2012) but the proportion and distribution of abnormally coloured individuals is not well known for many parts of the species' range. Here we describe the first records of leucistic House Sparrows in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India.

On 7<sup>th</sup> January 2016, we observed two House Sparrows perching on a *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* plant at Garacharma (11°37.055 N; 92°42.496 E), South Andaman. One individual was normally coloured female. The other one, most likely a male (black-marked throat) was a leucistic individual, i.e. in this case white for most part of the plumage, with some brown or black feathers on the back, wings, throat and face (Fig. 1). Eyes, bill and feet were normally coloured. This kind of colouration is due to the partial or complete lack of melanin in both plumage and skin (van Grouw 2013). For a detailed description and figures of normally coloured males see Clement et al. (1993).

Later, on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2018, we sighted a another male House Sparrow with similar leucistic characters but, except for single white feathers, with almost normally coloured back and wings at Hut Bay, Little Andaman (10°36.207 N; 93°33.264 E), South Andaman (Fig 2). This and the above described case are the first records of leucism in the House Sparrow from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India. Recently, Samson et al. (2018) reported for the first time a melanistic House Sparrow from Udthagamandalam, Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, India. Both leucistic and melanistic House Sparrows are generally well known. An inspection of museum specimens revealed a proportion of 3.3 % each for leucistic (complete and partial) and melanistic individuals (van Grow 2012). Whether this also reflects the respective proportions in the field remains to be investigated.

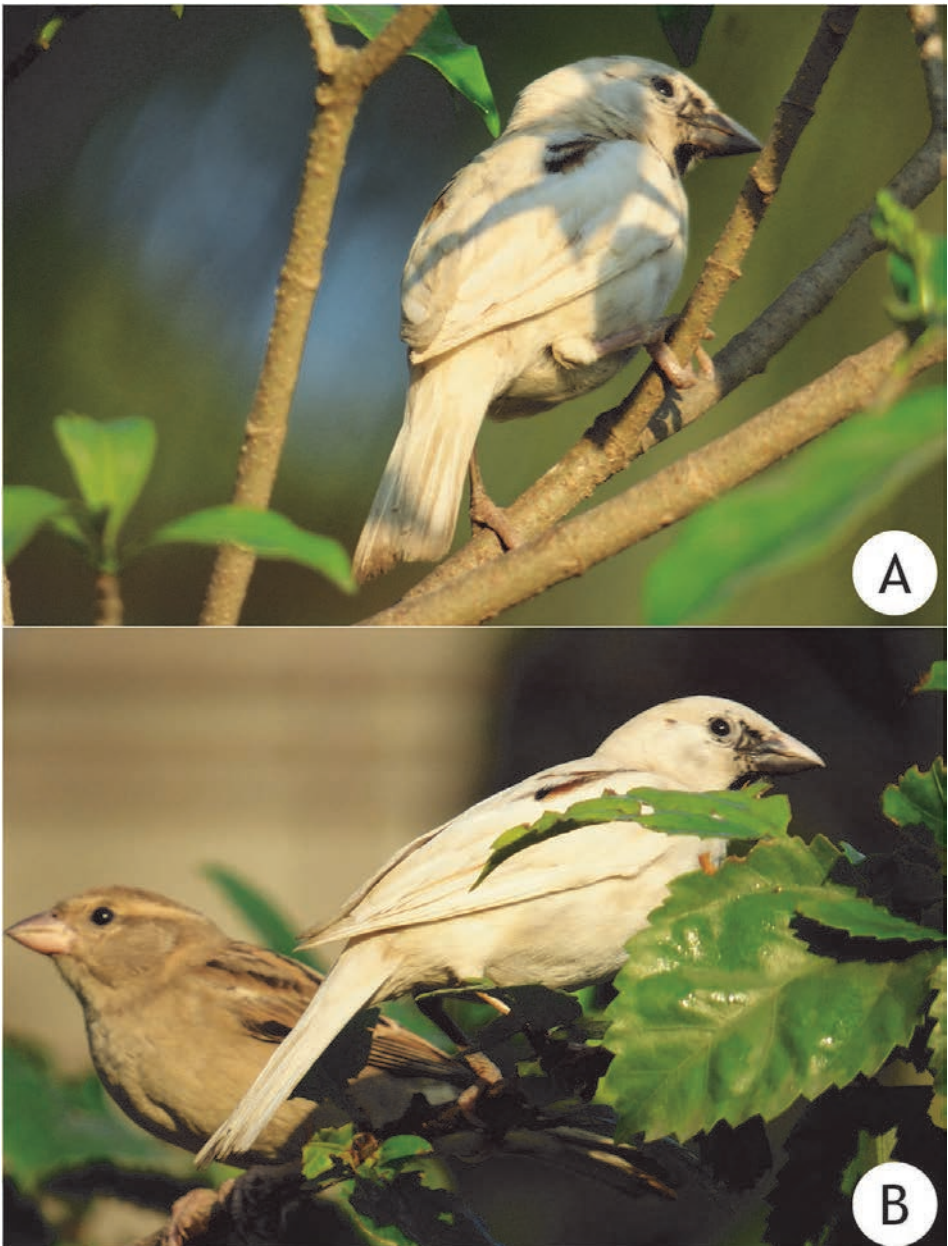


Fig. 1. Leucistic male and normally coloured female House Sparrow sighted at Garacharma, South Andaman



Fig. 2. Partially leucistic male House Sparrow sighted at Hut Bay, South Andaman

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