

*Albinism in *Ninia hudsoni**
PARKER, 1940 from Ecuador

There is only little information on albino snakes from the Neotropical region (VANZOLINI & CALLEFFO 2002) and this is the first record of albinism in the snake *Ninia hudsoni* PARKER, 1940 and in a reptile from Ecuador. *Ninia hudsoni* is a medium-sized nocturnal species distributed in the evergreen lowland of the Amazonian region in Ecuador, Peru and Guyana (formerly British Guiana) (PETERS & OREJAS-MIRANDA 1986; PÉREZ-SANTOS & MORENO 1991; DOAN & ARIZA-BAL 2002; VASCONCELOS DA SILVA 2006). The normal color-pattern of *N. hudsoni* is characterized by a black dorsum with a white nuchal band, immaculate white or cream venter and black eyes with rounded pupil.

Counts and measurements were compared with those of preserved specimens of the reference collection FHGO, Fundación Herpetológica Gustavo Orcés, Quito, to verify the correct identification. Geographic coordinates and collection dates were determined from the FHGO data base; for morphological measurements digital callipers (nearest 0.1 mm) were used.



Fig. 1: Albino of *Ninia hudsoni* PARKER, 1940 (FHGO 5548) (Photograph: Jorge H. VALENCIA).

On 31 August 2006, a juvenile individual of *N. hudsoni* (FHGO 5548) was collected in the indigenous Reserve Centro Shuar Amazonas, canton Taisha, Morona Santiago province (02°08'75"S, 77°42' 97"W, elevation 602 m). In vivo this snake presented a cream rosaceous dorsal coloration, in the snout and frontal region as well as from the fourth dorsal scale row to the tip of the tail, which had a more intense rosaceous color. Additionally, an entirely white nuchal band covered an area beginning at the posterior edge of the frontal and extending over the parietals and the first three rows of dorsal scales. Part of the frontal and supralabial scales, the prefrontals, nasals, loreal and preoculars were reddish. The venter was totally white, the eyes reddish with the pupil only little differentiated. In preservative, the specimen became white on the dorsal and ventral sides, with the anterior region of the head and eyes being rosaceous and the nuchal band barely discernable (Fig. 1). Pholidosis: dorsal scales keeled 21+21+21, ventrals 145, anal plate divided, subcaudals divided 60, temporals 2+3, supralabials 8/8, infralabials 5/5, snout-vent length 258 mm, tail length 61 mm.

Albinism is a comparatively rare event in relation to the number of reptile species and specimens in the world, particularly the Neotropical region. This is the first report of a reptile albino from Ecuador, and the authors are not aware of other reports on colubrid snakes with total or partial albinism from any of the South American coun-

tries. Most reports of albino snakes described vipers, of the genus *Crotalus* in particular (SAZIMA & DI BERNARDO 1992; VANZOLINI & CALLEFFO 2002).

The coloration of albinos is frequently homogenous (BECHTEL 1978), with a single dominant color, but it is common to find evidence, in most reports, of individuals with well-defined lines or dorsal bands. In the above individual of *N. hudsoni*, a single nuchal band is evident in relation to the rest of body, which is completely rosaceous cream. The maximum total length (body plus tail) reported for an individual of this species is 419 mm (VALENCIA et al. in press), the total length of the albino individual is 319 mm, which allows us to suppose that there was no strong predation pressure on this individual. This agrees with the conclusion of SAZIMA & DI BERNARDO (1992), who think that predation pressure on albinos cannot be severe because of the presence of albino individuals of various sizes and ages.

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