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Incomplete albinism in the Eurasian eagle owl

While frequently reported in birds, albinism is only rarely observed in cryptically colored avian species such as owls. These images represent—to the best of our knowledge—the first reported case of incomplete albinism in the Eurasian eagle owl (*Bubo bubo*). The female protagonist of this story (hereafter, Blanquita) was first observed as a 40-day-old owlet in a nest within the “Monte El Valle y Sierras de Altaona y Escalona” Special Protection Area of the Natura 2000 network (Province of Murcia, southeastern Spain). This observation occurred in 2020 during a routine field visit to ring (band) eagle owl chicks as part of a long-term monitoring project. Blanquita was the single abnormally colored owlet within a brood of four chicks from parents with the typical eagle owl coloration. At the fledgling stage, Blanquita was tagged with a VHF radio transmitter. After ten months of weekly radio-tracking, its carcass was found 20 km west of the natal territory, on a foothill within suitable habitat characterized by a high density of conspecifics, and showed signs of mammal scavenging. Unfortunately, the premature death of Blanquita precluded any in-depth research on potential albinism-mediated intraspecific conflicts in relation to eagle owl social organization (that is, mate selection and breeding). Its short lifespan highlights the challenge for conspicuous aberrantly colored owls in maintaining camouflage at daily roosting sites, as they are more vulnerable to detection by predators.



Mario León-Ortega¹, José A Lacalle¹,
 Antonio Zamora-López^{1,2}, and José M Zamora-Marín^{1,3}
¹*Ulula, Association for Owl Study and Conservation,
 Murcia, Spain;*
²*Department of Zoology and Physical Anthropology,
 University of Murcia, Murcia, Spain;*
³*Department of Applied Biology,
 Miguel Hernández University, Elche, Spain*
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