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ALBINISM WITHIN THE CYPRAEIDAE SPECIES: *CYPRAEA TIGRIS* LINNAEUS, 1758 FROM THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS (GASTROPODA: CYPRAEIDAE)

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October, 2026

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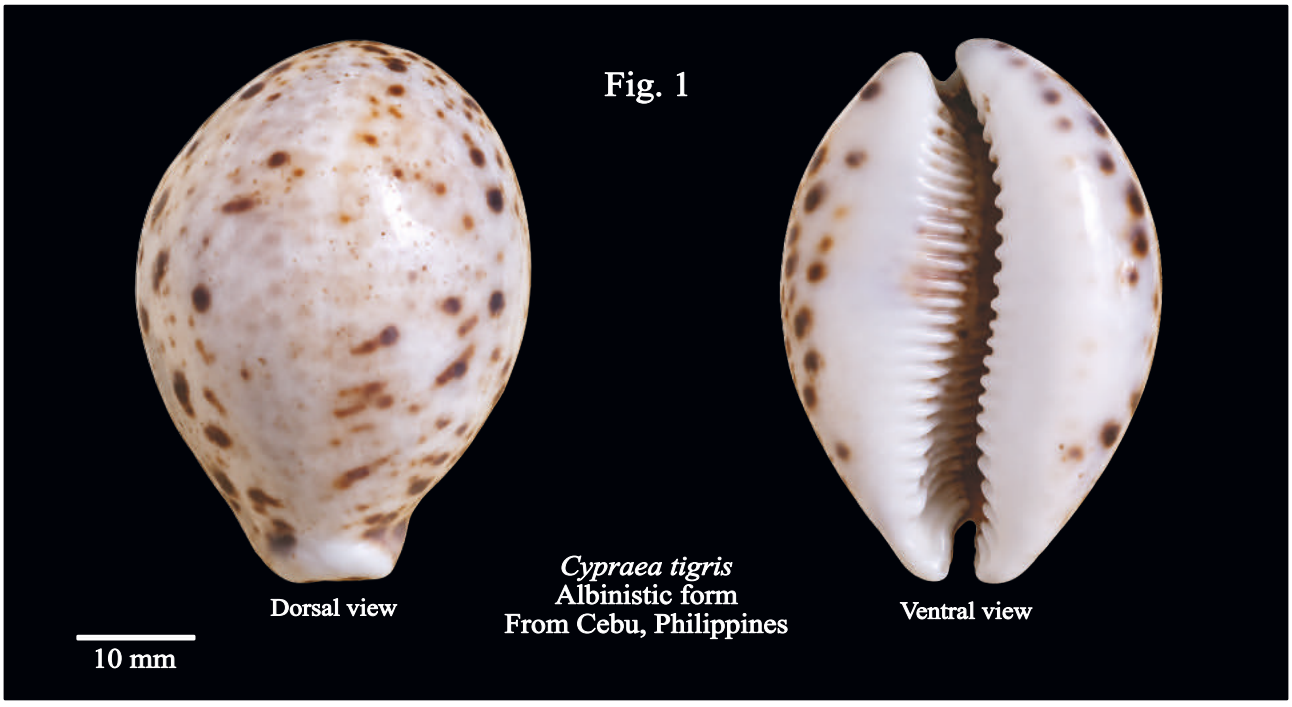
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This paper documents and describes an unusually pale specimen of *Cypraea tigris* from Cebu, Philippines, and discusses its identification as an albinistic rather than a true albino form. *Cypraea tigris* is extremely variable in coloration and pattern and exhibits numerous intermediate forms. Both melanistic and albinistic forms occur in the species, although albinistic forms are more common.

Albinism in cowries, especially *C. tigris*, is associated with reduced pigmentation in the shell and soft tissues. A true albino shell is entirely white and shows no pigmented spots, whereas partially albinistic shells may retain faint or sparse markings. The specimen illustrated in this paper was obtained from a dealer in Cebu, Philippines, in 1988. Because it retains some markings, it is not considered a true albino.

Family **CYPRAEIDAE** Rafinesque, 1815
Genus ***Cypraea*** Linnaeus, 1758
Type species ***Cypraea tigris*** Linnaeus, 1758



Cypraea tigris is a large, heavy shell when adult but is lighter during the juvenile, or bulla stage. The shell is bulbous and oval, broader posteriorly and tapering toward the anterior end, with a smooth, glossy surface. Its pattern and coloration are highly variable, typically consisting of dark brown to nearly black spots on a white, brown, or bluish ground. Two uncommon color forms are recognized: an extremely rare melanistic form and a more frequently encountered white or albinistic form. Reduced pigmentation may be associated with nutritional, developmental, or environmental factors, although the cause in this specimen has not been established. In conchology, the term "albinistic" is commonly applied to unusually pale shells, whereas "albino" is generally reserved for organisms showing a complete absence of pigmentation.

DESCRIPTION

Sculpture and stature: Specimen measuring 93.88 mm in length, 65.12 mm in width, and 49.56 mm in height, globose, mostly white with intermittent dark black spots. And heavy in weight. Inflated in the center and somewhat tapering toward the anterior end.

APERTURE

Some spots flowing to the underside, columella and labial teeth course and strong. There is a slight haze or markings deep within the surface of the dorsum. Aperture wide with denticles flowing inward on the columella margin. Very pronounced sinus on both posterior and anterior of the aperture opening. Anterior end with a nose like projection of the lip.

PROTOCONCH

The protoconch is indistinct and sunken into the shell.

LOCALITY

Cebu, Philippines.

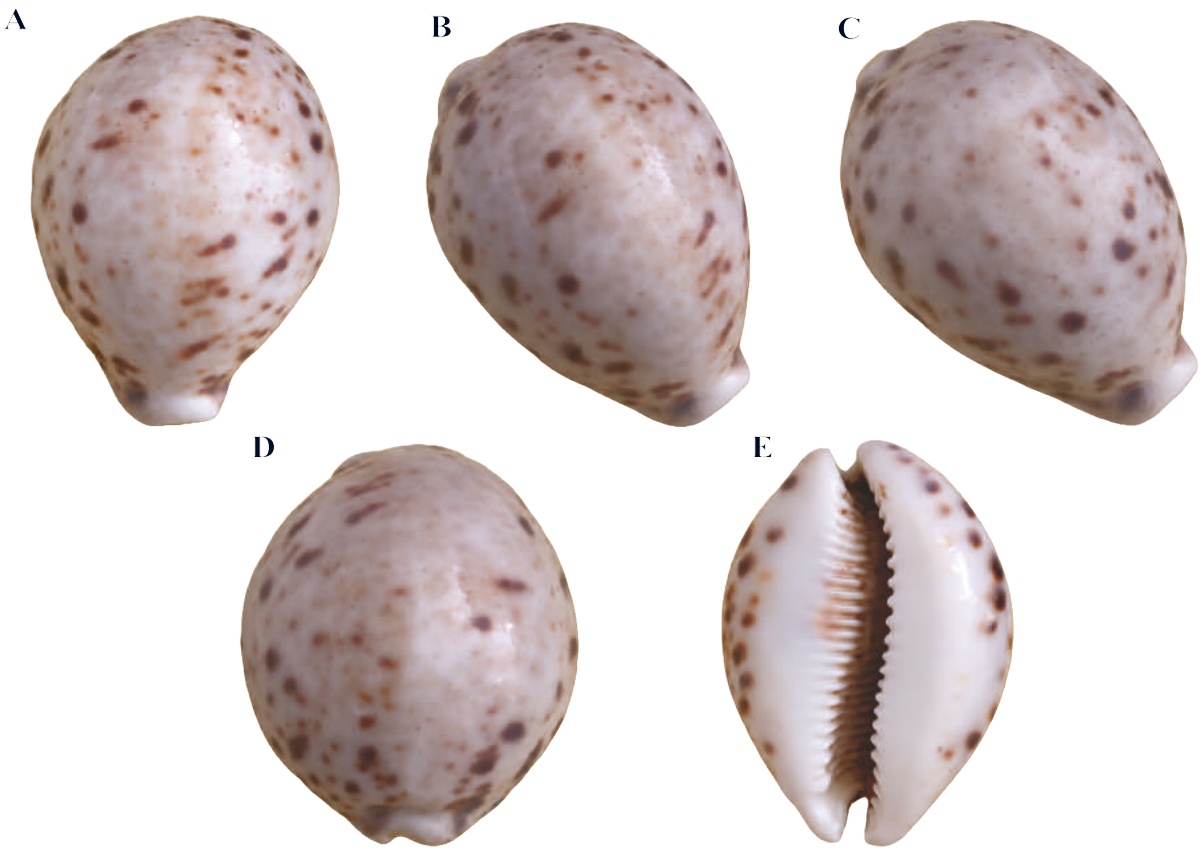


Plate 1. ***Cypraea tigris***, albinistic form. Five views of a specimen from Cebu, Philippines.

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ISSN 1656-4650