
NEW DATA ON THE VILLAFRANCHIAN VERTEBRATE FAUNA OF KOS ISLAND (DODECANESE, GREECE) FROM A HISTORICAL COLLECTION

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The island of Kos is located in the Southeastern Aegean and has been a site of paleontological research for over 150 years. Early paleontological explorations were conducted by Forsyth-Major, Desio, and Airaghi between 1885 and 1935, while recent studies by Willmann, Van der Meulen, and the present authors have updated the stratigraphic context of both historical and newly discovered fossil occurrences. Alongside these published records, important historical material was found to have remained undocumented. During a large-scale digitization project at the Museum of Geology and Paleontology of Athens, an unpublished collection of vertebrate remains from Kos Island collected by Prof. Nikolaos Symeonidis during the 1970s was uncovered. According to archival documentation, the material originates from at least two fossiliferous sites situated in the broader area between the villages of Antimacheia and Kardamena. The collection reveals a diverse Early Pleistocene vertebrate fauna consisting of 12 taxa. We report the first evidence of the castorid *Castor* sp. from the fossil record of Kos. Other identified taxa include the proboscideans *Anancus arvernensis* and *Mammuthus meridionalis*, the machairodontid *Homotherium* sp., the rhinocerotid *Stephanorhinus* cf. *etruscus*, the equid *Equus* cf. *stenonis*, the bovids *Leptobos* sp. and *Gazella* sp., as well as the cervids small sized *Cervus* sp. and *Croizetoceros* sp. Representatives of the herpetofauna include the testudinid *Testudo* sp. and the geoemydid *Mauremys* sp. This faunal assemblage suggests that Early Pleistocene eustatic lowstands created recurrent land bridges with the Anatolian Peninsula, which enabled the dispersal of the Villafranchian megafauna into the present Aegean island of Kos.

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