

IX. Late Pleistocene birds of Hôrka-Ondrej

Travertine deposits of eastern Slovakia yielded numerous Archaeological finds dated back to the Eemian interglacial (*Bárta 1990, Bánesz 1991*). These records were only rarely accompanied by avian remains, of which only an egg was described thus far (*Holec/Matoušek 1986*). Below, remains of birds are described, coming from the middle Paleolithic site Hôrka-Ondrej in eastern Slovakia.

The locality is travertine mound Nr. 596 (*sensu Kovanda 1971*), laying on the northern border of Hôrka-Ondrej village, ESE of Poprad in eastern Slovakia. The locality was excavated in 1987-1995 by Lubomíra Kaminská (Archaeological Institute, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Košice) and co-workers. Its detailed description is given in *Kaminská et al. (1993)* and *Kovanda et al. (1995)*. Vertebrate fauna from Hôrka-Ondrej was described by *Horáček (1995; 1997)*, who dated it in the Eemian = Riss/Würm interglacial, i.e. in the earliest part of the late Pleistocene.

Avian remains in the collections of the Archaeological Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Košice, Slovakia. Below, areas and trenches at Hôrka-Ondrej are labeled by letters (A-F), and numbers or letters after the slash correspond to individual layers (see *Kaminská et al. 1993, Kovanda et al. 1995*). Sequence of avian taxa and nomenclature follow *Voous (1977)*. Minimum numbers of individuals (MNI) were calculated according to *Grayson (1984)*.

Systematic list

Anas sp. (Duck)

F/1: coracoid dex.; MNI = 1.

Remarks: In size, this coracoid corresponds to the same element of the European species *Anas acuta* (Pintail), *Anas strepera* (Gadwall), and *Anas penelope* (European Wigeon). Coracoids of these three species cannot be discerned with any certainty (cf. *Woelfle 1967*).

Tetrao tetrix Linnaeus (Black Grouse)

A/-: prox. coracoid sin.

A/D: ulna dex.; MNI = 1.

A/G: prox. coracoid sin., dist. humerus dex., carpometacarpus dex., 2 dist. tibiotarsus sin.;

MNI = 2.

A/II: prox. radius dex., carpometacarpus dex.; MNI = 1.

C/10a: prox. coracoid sin., dist. humerus sin.; MNI = 1.

C/10b: prox. femur sin.; MNI = 1.

D/A1: dist. radius sin.; MNI = 1.

Tetrao urogallus Linnaeus (Capercaillie)

C/-: prox. coracoid dex.; MNI = 1.

Coturnix coturnix (Linnaeus) (Common Quail)

A/-: 2 prox. coracoids sin.; MNI = 2.

D/II: dist. humerus dex.; MNI = 1.

Discussion

Taphonomy. Coracoids markedly outnumber other avian bones in the whole sample, which indicates that the bones were redeposited by fluvial processes after the skeletons became disarticulated (cf. *Korth 1979*). Grouses of the genus *Tetrao* form 81% of bones and 73% of MNI in the whole sample, which certainly does not reflect natural composition of the avian community living at Hôrka-Ondrej during the Eemian interglacial. Sex could be identified for most of the bones of *Tetrao* grouses according to their size (see *Erbersdobler 1968*). The recorded Capercaillie was a female, but all identifiable remains of Black Grouses came from males. Male Black Grouses perform group lekking in spring which time easily become prey of predators. Strong bias in the composition of the avian taphocenosis from Hôrka-Ondrej toward grouses in general, and male Black Grouses in particular, can thus be best explained by selectivity of a sufficiently large predator. Possible candidates, recorded from Hôrka-Ondrej (*Horáček 1995; 1997*) are foxes (*Vulpes*), cats (*Felis*), and humans (*Homo*).

Ecology: Lekking Black Grouses prefer moist meadows, but breed mainly in coniferous forests. Capercaillies are birds of coniferous forests. Common Quails inhabit open country. Hypothetically, moist meadows were surrounded by coniferous forests at Hôrka-Ondrej during the formation of the avian taphocenosis.

Zoogeography: All bird species recorded from Hôrka-Ondrej still inhabit eastern Slovakia (Ferianc 1977; Hudec/Černý 1977; Štastný et al. 1987).

Paleopathology: None of the avian bones found in Hôrka-Ondrej showed any signs of pathological changes.

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HÔRKA-ONDREJ

Research of a Middle Palaeolithic Travertine Locality

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