Short note

The Cave Bear (Ursus spelaeus Rosenmüller, 1794) at the Exposition of Natural History Museum - Plovdiv

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Abstract. Cave Bear bones were collected in April 2012 from Vodnata Cave near Peshtera town (Pazardzhik Region). The cave is a new locality of Pleistocene vertebrate fauna of Bulgaria.

Key words: new locality of Pleistocene vertebrates, fossil bear, Balkans, natural history exhibitions.

Introduction

The cave bear had a very broad, domed skull with a steep forehead. Its stout body had long thighs, massive shins and in-turning feet, making it similar in skeletal structure to the brown bear (BROWN, 1996). Cave bears were comparable in size to the largest modern-day bears. Of cave bear skeletons in museums, 90% are male due to a misconception that the female skeletons were smaller. Cave bears grew larger during glaciations and smaller during interglacials, probably to adjust heat loss rate (MACDONALD, 1992).

Material and Methods

Animal bones were collected from Vodnata Cave near Peshtera town in April 2012 by members of Speleo Club Paldin – Plovdiv and Natural History Museum – Plovdiv. The cave is 1114 m long with denivelation of +50 m, and is situated at 900 m a.s.l. (BERON et al., 2009). Materials were later conserved by the first author and deposited in the collections of the museum. Some of the collected bones were used for preparation of an entire skeleton and exposed at the entrance museum parts (Fig. 1) or in the section “Paleontology”, and some were deposited in the museum funds (Fig. 2).

Results

At least five adult and two juvenile Cave Bears were identified as single specimens among the materials. Vodnata Cave represents a new unknown so far locality of Pleistocene fauna in Bulgaria.

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References


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![Image of Cave Bear skeleton]

**Fig. 1.** The Assembled skeleton of Cave Bear from Vodnata Cave in the exposition of Natural History Museum - Plovdiv. Photo: Ognyan Todorov.

![Image of skeletal elements]

**Fig. 2.** Some of the skeletal elements of *Ursus spelaeus* collected from Vodnata Cave, deposited in the Natural History Museum - Plovdiv. Photo: Dilian Georgiev.