

A PHYLOGENY OF THE GENUS *NYCTEREUTES* TEMMINCK, 1838 (MAMMALIA: CARNIVORA: CANIDAE), INCLUDING A NEW SPECIES FROM ÇALTA (TURKEY)

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The phylogenetic relationships of the raccoon-dog, *Nyctereutes procyonoides*, were matter of debate in the last decades. Morphological phylogenies recognized some affinities between *Nyctereutes* and some South American canids, e.g. *Cerdocyon*, whereas more recent molecular studies support the inclusion of the raccoon-dog in the tribe Vulpini together with the genera *Vulpes* and *Otocyon*. The present study reports the first most-parsimonious analysis on extant and fossil species of *Nyctereutes* using a dataset of 115 *ad hoc* selected cranial, dentognathic, cerebral and postcranial characters, analyzed through the freeware software TNT v. 1.5. The resulting strict consensus tree (tested with bootstrap and decay techniques) shows the presence of two clades: one made up by the African *N. lockwoodi* and *N. terblanchei*, and one composed of the enigmatic *N. barryi* from Laetoli, all the other Eurasian species and also *N. abdeslami* from Morocco. The resulting arrangement partially confirms previous hypotheses on the relationships among the fossil *Nyctereutes*, although it points out several unexpected pattern to the intricate taxonomic tangle of fossil raccoon-dogs. The results supports the development of two different models to explain the dispersal of the ancestors of this genus from North America into the Old World. Lastly, the analysis reveals the peculiarity of the *Nyctereutes* from Çalta (Turkey). Previous descriptions related this taxon to *N. donnezani*. Our analysis points out a closer affinity to morphologically derived *Nyctereutes*, therefore, we suggest the ascription of the taxon to a new species.