

# TRAGULIDAE AND PECORAN RUMINANTS FROM THE LATEST MIDDLE MIOCENE (SARMATIAN, LATE ASTARACIAN) OF AUSTRIA

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One of the richest and most complete European terrestrial vertebrate faunas of late Middle Miocene age (12.2–12.0 Ma; Gross et al., in press) was found near Gratkorn, at the northeastern realm of the Styrian Basin (Austria). It is one of the rare localities from the Sarmatian *sensu stricto* (late Serravallian) in the Central Paratethys area with a vertebrate fauna, both high in quality as well as rich in quantity. So far, 62 taxa are recorded, including *Euprox furcatus*, *Micromeryx flourensianus* and *Dorcatherium nauti*. This is one of the rare records of *Dorcatherium nauti* older than Vallesian and the oldest finding of the species from the Paratethys realm so far. Up to now, *Dorcatherium nauti* of pre-Vallesian ages have only been described from Przeworno (Poland; Glazek et al., 1971), and Abocador de Can Mata (Spain; Alba et al., 2011), which are of latest Middle Miocene age like Gratkorn. Therefore the latter

does not only represent one of the oldest records of *Dorcatherium naui* but also supports the wide distribution of the taxon already at the latest Middle Miocene. In contrast to the site of Abocador de Can Mata, where *Dorcatherium naui* is an infrequent element (Alba et al., 2011), the species is abundant at the locality of Gratkorn. Apart from this the larger mammal fauna of Abocadar de Can Mata and Gratkorn is quite similar, except of proboscidean and bovid taxa. While in Abocador de Can Mata *Gomphotherium*, *Deinotherium* and bovids are present (Alba et al., 2009), in Gratkorn only *Deinotherium giganteum* was found until now. Bovids were found in contemporaneous sediments in the eastern Styrian Basin (Gross et al., in press), though. With the material of Gratkorn previous ideas on ecological adaptations in *Dorcatherium* (Rössner, 2004) are supported and the understanding of the ecological niche of the “forest-dweller” *Dorcatherium* is specified. Besides new ideas on dispersal, evolution and ecology of *Dorcatherium* the locality of Gratkorn also enables an in-depth evaluation of its species separation. The specimens from Gratkorn demonstrate, in comparison with other Material from the Paratethys area, a clear distinction between *Dorcatherium crassum* and *Dorcatherium naui* and underline the taxonomic separation of both species as accepted by several authors (e.g. Alba et al., 2011).

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