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Neogene Flying Squirrels (Pteromyinae, Mammalia) of Ukraine

The oldest and most diversified Pteromyinae community of Ukraine is known from the Early Vallesian (MN 9) karstic fissure filling of the Grytsiv, where they occur associated with rich fauna of small vertebrates. The flying squirrels from Grytsiv are represented by three taxa: *Blackia* aff. *miocaenica* Mein, 1970; *Miopetaurista* sp. and *Forsythia* sp. All above mentioned genera are known from the Vallesian of Western and Central Europe, which is believed to be the area of origin of the Ukrainian Pteromyinae species. In the Late Vallesian no Pteromyins recorded due to the fact that there is only a scanty rodents record from single MN 10 site.

The Vallesian-Turolian boundary reveals a strong change of the Pteromyinae communities e. g., genera *Blackia* Mein, 1970 and *Forsythia* Mein, 1970 are not found in post-Vallesian aged deposits of Ukraine, so far, in the Turolian the Pteromyins are represented exclusively by the *Pliopetaurista* Kretzoi, 1962 and *Miopetaurista* Kretzoi, 1962.

Pliopetaurista made its first appearance in Ukraine during the Early Turolian (MN 11) in species level of *Pliopetaurista* cf. *bressana* Mein, 1970. It seems reasonable to say that Ukrainian species appear to have derived from European *Pliopetaurista kollmanni-bressana* group, most likely in the top of Vallesian. The dental pattern of specimens from Palievo and Kubanka is characterized by totally reduction of hypolophid on m3 and weak developed mesostylide, as typical of *P. bressana* from Vallesian (Soblay, Schernham) and Lover Turolian (Kohfidisch, Eichkogel) localities of Western and Central Europe.

The Middle Turolian (MN 12) riverine alluvial deposits of Novoelizavetovka 3 contain among other rodents two flying squirrels – *Miopetaurista* cf. *thaleri* Mein, 1970 and *Pliopetaurista* sp. The molars of *Pliopetaurista* from Novoelizavetovka 3 shares plesiomorphic dental features with *P. bressana* in the proportion of m3, structure of occlusal surface and some derived features of *P. dehneli.* The materials from upper layer of Novoelizavetovka section may represent a transitional form, if the tentative lineage *P. bressana-P. dehneli* really exist.

The poorly documented *Pliopetaurista* from Lectostratotype of Pontian in Odessa (Late Turolian, MN 13) probably represented the oldest population of *P. dehneli* (Sulimski, 1964) in Ukraine. Unfortunately, its exact systematic position is still ambiguous due to insufficient preservation of Pteromyinae materials from current locality.

In the Early Pliocene faunas the genus represented by large and advanced species, which was erroneously noted by G.I. Baranova and N.I. Konkova as *P. moldavensis* sp.n. It seems likely, however, that *P. moldavensis* could be a junior synonym of *P. dehneli.* The locality Trudomirovka (Ruscinian, MN 14) yielded a middle-worn mandible with p4-m3 the morphology and size of which is similar to *P. dehneli* from Late Ruscinian and Villanyan localities of Central Europe and larger than populations from Maramena (MN 13-14 boundary) and Podlesice (MN 14). It is likely that Ukrainian *Pliopetaurista* species vanished largely at the end of Ruscinian.

Pteromyinae are closely associated with the deciduous and conifer forests. The relative scarcity of Pteromyinae rests, especially at Turolian localities, was probably due to decrease of thickly wooded areas.