

A new species of silverside from the Late Miocene of NW Iran

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The genus *Atherina* (Atheriniformes, Teleostei) includes five extant brackish and marine species that inhabit the eastern Atlantic, Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, and Caspian Sea. Several fossil species are known from the Mediterranean and Paratethyan basins. Here we describe a new fossil species, *Atherina atropatiensis* sp. nov., from Upper Miocene deposits of the intramontane Tabriz Basin in NW Iran, based on well-preserved, articulated skeletons from the Lignite Beds at Baghmisheh–Marzdaran, near Tabriz. The new fossil species closely resembles the Recent *A. boyeri*, the only extant species of *Atherina* in the Caspian Sea, from which it can be distinguished by the different relative development of the ascending and alveolar processes of the premaxilla, and the mutual relationship between pleural ribs and dorsolateral process of the basipterygium. The systematic and zoogeographic affinities of *A. atropatiensis* indicate that the Lignite Beds of the Tabriz Basin were deposited in a euryhaline environment and that a connection between the intramontane Tabriz Basin and the Eastern Paratethys (Southern Caspian Sea) once existed.

Key words: Teleostei, Atheriniformes, *Atherina*, osteology, palaeogeography, Miocene, Tabriz Basin, Iran.

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