

The oldest known Miocene snake fauna from Central Europe: Merkur-North locality, Czech Republic

Martin Ivanov

Acta Palaeontologica Polonica 47 (3), 2002: 513-534

The Early Miocene Merkur-North locality (MN 3a) represents the oldest known Miocene ophidian locality in Europe east of Germany. The snake assemblage is characterised by high species diversity and includes the following families: Boidae (*Bavarioboa* sp.), Colubridae (*Coluber dolnicensis*, *Coluber suevicus*, *Coluber caspioides*, cf. *Elaphe* sp., *Natrix merkurensis* sp. nov., *Natrix sansaniensis*), Elapidae (Elapidae gen. et sp. indet.), and Viperidae (*Vipera* sp.-"*Vipera aspis*" complex). Fossils of the extinct species, *Coluber dolnicensis*, *Coluber suevicus*, and *Natrix sansaniensis*, represent their earliest known occurrences. The cranial elements of *C. suevicus* and *N. sansaniensis* are described for the first time. Discoveries of cf. *Elaphe* sp. may represent the earliest fossil member of the genus *Elaphe*. Elapidae gen. et sp. indet. probably represents the oldest known member of the cobras.

Key words: Snakes, Boidae, Colubridae, Elapidae, Viperidae, Early Miocene, Czech Republic

Martin Ivanov [mivanov@mzm.cz], Department of Geology and Palaeontology, Moravian Museum, Zelný trh 6, 659 37 Brno, Czech Republic.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (for details please see creativecommons.org), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.