

A skull of a new pelecaniform bird from the Middle Eocene of Messel, Germany

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A skull of a new pelecaniform bird is described from the Middle Eocene of Messel (Germany). *Masillastega rectirostris* gen. et sp. nov. is tentatively referred to the Sulidae (boobies and gannets). If this assignment is correct, the new taxon would represent the earliest fossil record of the family, preceding *Sula ronzoni* Milne-Edwards, 1867 from the lowermost Oligocene of France by about 15 million years. *Masillastega rectirostris* most distinctly differs from extant Sulidae in the proportionally longer beak which indicates that the Eocene taxon was not adapted to plunge-diving. Contrary to extant Sulidae, which are exclusively marine birds, *Masillastega rectirostris* was found in a freshwater deposit. It is the first pelecaniform bird known from Messel and one of the few large birds discovered at this site.

Key words: Birds, Pelecaniformes, Sulidae, *Masillastega*, Messel, Eocene

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