

## **Animal remains of the Late Antiquity settlement (1-4th c. AD) near Dolni Lukovit (Pleven Region, CN Bulgaria)**

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**Abstract.** A total of 29 bones and bone fragments of wild and domestic birds and mammals collected in the Late Antiquity military settlement near Dolni Lukovit village (Pleven Region, CN Bulgaria) have been identified as 9 species of 7 orders. Most numerous are the remains of pigs and chickens. The species composition suggests the existence of open treeless grassy habitats in the vicinity of settlements.

**Key words:** Subfossil birds and mammals, Late Antiquity, Little bustard.

The animal material (bones, bone splinters and teeth) was collected between 07-20.07.2019 from layers of 0.20 to 1.10 m depth during the rescue archaeological excavations at "Site 3003, Dolni Lukovit" - SMG "Bulgartransgaz" under leadership of the archaeologist Dr. Yanko Dimitrov (Branch of the National Archaeological Institute with Museum - Shumen). It originates from 6 squares: 15D, 10C, 20-21/ A-B, 50-51/A, 9/D, and 15D. The material was handed for examination in September 2019 by Prof. Dr. Nikolay Nachev (Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen).

In recent years, animal remains of several sites of Holocene age have been studied in the middle part of the Danube Plain (CN Bulgaria): two caves near the villages of Krushuna and Aleksandrovo (Lovech Region; Boev 2012), Late Antiquity settlement near Barkach (Pleven Region; Boev 2019) and medieval settlement near Nedan (Veliko Tarnovo Region, Boev & Popgeorgiev 2021). Present study of the settlement near Dolni Lukovit completes our scanty data on the wildlife past in this large region of the country.

Although few, the studied archaeozoological material is taxonomically quite diverse. A total of 9 species of birds and mammals (including humans) from 7 orders are presented with 29 bones and bone fragments (Table 1). Two of the wild bird species are of particular interest because they inhabit quite different habitats. While the lesser bustard (*Tetrax tetrax*) is an inhabitant of the treeless vast grassy plain landscapes, the wood pigeon (*Columba palumbus*) inhabits woodlands. The steppe habitats are also supported by the presence of the remains of the European hare (*Lepus europaeus*) and the ground squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*). This is an indication of the predominance of open grassy habitats.

Along with hunting, the inhabitants of the ancient settlement also practiced animal husbandry - poultry (domestic hens) and livestock (sheep/goats, pigs and ?dogs). Although scarce, this information marks, at least in general, the character of the landscape and the livelihood of the population of the investigated ancient site.

The remains of two forms of domestic animals (pig and chicken) make up 61% of the material examined, and all domestic animals amount to 75% of the material. This shows

that hunting had a significantly lower importance in the supplying of meat of the population in the settlement.

**Table 1.** Animal representation in the collected archaeozoological material from the Late Antiquity settlement (1-4th c. AD) near Dolni Lukovit (Pleven Region, CN Bulgaria)

Taxa	Number of finds	Notes
<b>Birds (Aves)</b>		
Otidiformes		
<i>Tetrax tetrax</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	1	diaphysis
Columbiformes		
<i>Columba palumbus</i> Linnaeus, 1758	1	
Galliformes		
<i>Gallus gallus</i> f. <i>domestica</i>	7	MNI=3
(Aves indet.)		
Aves indet.	1	bone splinter
<b>Mammals (Mammalia)</b>		
Lagomorpha		
<i>Lepus europaeus</i> Pallas, 1778	2	
Rodentia		
<i>Spermophilus citellus</i> (Linnaeus, 1766)	1	
Artiodactyla		
cf. <i>Sus scrofa</i> Linnaeus, 1758/ <i>domesticus</i>	10	
<i>Capra hircus</i> Linnaeus, 1758	1	
<i>Ovis/Capra</i>	2	rib fragments
Carnivora		
cf. <i>Canis familiaris</i> Linnaeus, 1758	1	
(Mammalia indet. )		
Eutheria indet.	1	bone splinter
Human		
<i>Homo sapiens</i> Linnaeus, 1758	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	

## References

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