



Afro-tropical and Afro-Indo-Malayan elements in the Neogene avifauna of Bulgaria and their paleozoogeographical implementations

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The Neogene avian fauna of Bulgaria is rich and diversified. It consists in 98 taxa (26 families and 13 orders) at least. Peafowls (*Pavo* Linnaeus, 1758), Ostriches (*Struthio* Linnaeus, 1758) and Ground-Hornbills (*Bucorvinae* Verheyen, 1955) are the only three avian taxa of recent Afro-tropical/Afro-tropical - Indo-Malayan distribution, established in the Bulgarian Neogene record. The Bravard's peafowl (*Pavo bravardi* (Gervais, 1849)), roamed the Balkan forests, possibly by the first cooling of climate in the very end of Pliocene. It is the last resident (non-migratory) avian species of the s. c. "tropical" complex of Europe. In some refugia it is likely that this peafowl survived in the relatively warmer habitats until more recent time by the beginning of the Pleistocene. The records of Ostriches (*Struthio* sp.) in two sites (very close to the Greek border) seriously contribute to the hypothesis of the very fast elevation of the surrounding mountains. The regions in the vicinities of the localities in the Late Miocene ca. 9 mya were similar to the present day African open clear grass savannah with scattered trees and shrubs. Both sites are lie ca. 80 km away from the highest peak of the Balkan Peninsula, the Mount Musala (2925 m a. s. l.) in the Rila Mountain. The finds of the Ground-Hornbills (*Euroceros bulgaricus* Boev & Kovachev, 2007) confirm the former range-continuity throughout Europe, possibly, at least until the Late Miocene. They suggest that within the Bucorvini in the Turolian - Meotian at least two lineages existed. On the other hand, they also confirm former presence of the savannah-like biomes in Southern Bulgaria.