

Non-Metric Cranial Characterization and Differentiation of Forest Dormouse *Dryomys nitedula* (Mammalia: Rodentia) in Hungary

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Abstract: The analysis of the variability of 12 craniological non-metric epigenetic characters studied on skulls of 23 individuals of the Forest dormouse (*Dryomys nitedula* PALLAS, 1779) from Hungary revealed a moderate degree of polymorphism with regard to frequency distributions and epigenetic variability ($V_i=0,0682$). The comparative evaluation of the population epigenetic uniqueness of Forest dormouse from Hungary and forest-mountainous populations from Bulgaria manifested the well-expressed cranial epigenetic uniqueness ($MU=1.020$) of Hungarian populations. The revealed specific epigenetic cranial polymorphism and population divergence of the Hungarian Forest dormouse increase the interest in monitoring of the biological diversity and the distributional ecology of this species in Hungary with regard to its consolidated legislative protection in the country.

Key words: epigenetic polymorphism, Forest dormouse, *Dryomys nitedula*, Population uniqueness