

Avian Remains from the Early Neolithic Settlement Near Yabalkovo Village (Haskovo Region, South-East Bulgaria)

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Abstract: Twelve bird bone remains (MNI=8), of 3 orders, 3 families and 5 species (including domestic forms), dated ca. 6500 B. P. of *Cygnus olor*, *Anser* sp. (cf. *Anser albifrons* or *Anser anser*, *Gallus gallus domestica*, and *Fulica atra* have been identified. The findings of *C. olor* and *F. atra* are among the oldest ones so far in the country.

Yabalkovo is the oldest site in Bulgaria, proving the existence of poultry-breeding.

Game fowling (mainly of water birds), along with the poultry-breeding, played an important role in the life of inhabitants of the settlement. Poultry-breeding was non-selective and both large (of the Colchic pheasant size) and small (of the Bantam breeds size) adult individuals of domestic fowl have been found.

It is concluded from a broken and healed ulna of an adult individual of *F. atra* that the bird had the opportunity to survive besides its incapability to fly. Hence, the conclusion that suitable refuges of dense swampy vegetation existed in the surroundings of the settlement.

Complete review of Bulgarian fossil/subfossil record of all recorded species is represented.

Key words: Early Neolithic birds, Holocene avian remains, Bulgaria, Archaeozoology, early poultry-breeding, game-fowl, bone abnormalities