

# *Gyps bochenskii* sp. n. (Aves: Falconiformes) from the Late Pliocene of Varshets (NW Bulgaria)

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**Abstract:** A new species of griffon vulture (*Gyps bochenskii* sp. n.) is described from the Late Pliocene (Middle Villafranchian) deposits of a locality near Varshets (NW Bulgaria). The site was discovered in 1987 and has the richest Late Pliocene (MN 17) vertebrate fauna in Europe. The more than 71 avian species are indicative of a forest-steppe landscape. Petrophyllous species are widely represented among the fossil material. The finds represent the oldest remains of a griffon vulture, with four skeletal elements: sternum (coracoidal and costal parts), coracoid dex. (humeral and sternal parts), phalanx dist. dig. I pedis sin. and phalanx dist. dig. majoris sin. These remains verify the presence of vultures, and griffon vultures in particular, in Europe (and the Palearctic) before the glacial events of the Pleistocene. The morphology distinguishes (holotype, sternum) the specimens from recent species of *Gyps* by: steeply orientation of linea intermuscularis; relatively thicker incisurae intercostales; relatively longer incisura intercostalis IV; presence of a well developed fossa on the dorsal surface of the sternum above the manubrium; relatively larger (wider) rostrum sterni; cranially less protruding rostrum sterni; relatively wider sternum in dorsal view; narrower distance between the dorsal edges of the sulci articulares, and larger dimensions. Differences from Pleistocene *G. melitensis*: better developed hind limbs (about 1/10 in the measurements of distal pedal phalanges) and the same development of wings (phalanx dist. dig. majoris).

**Key words:** Late Pliocene, Griffon vultures; Bulgaria; Aves; Accipitridae, new species, *Gyps bochenskii* sp. n.