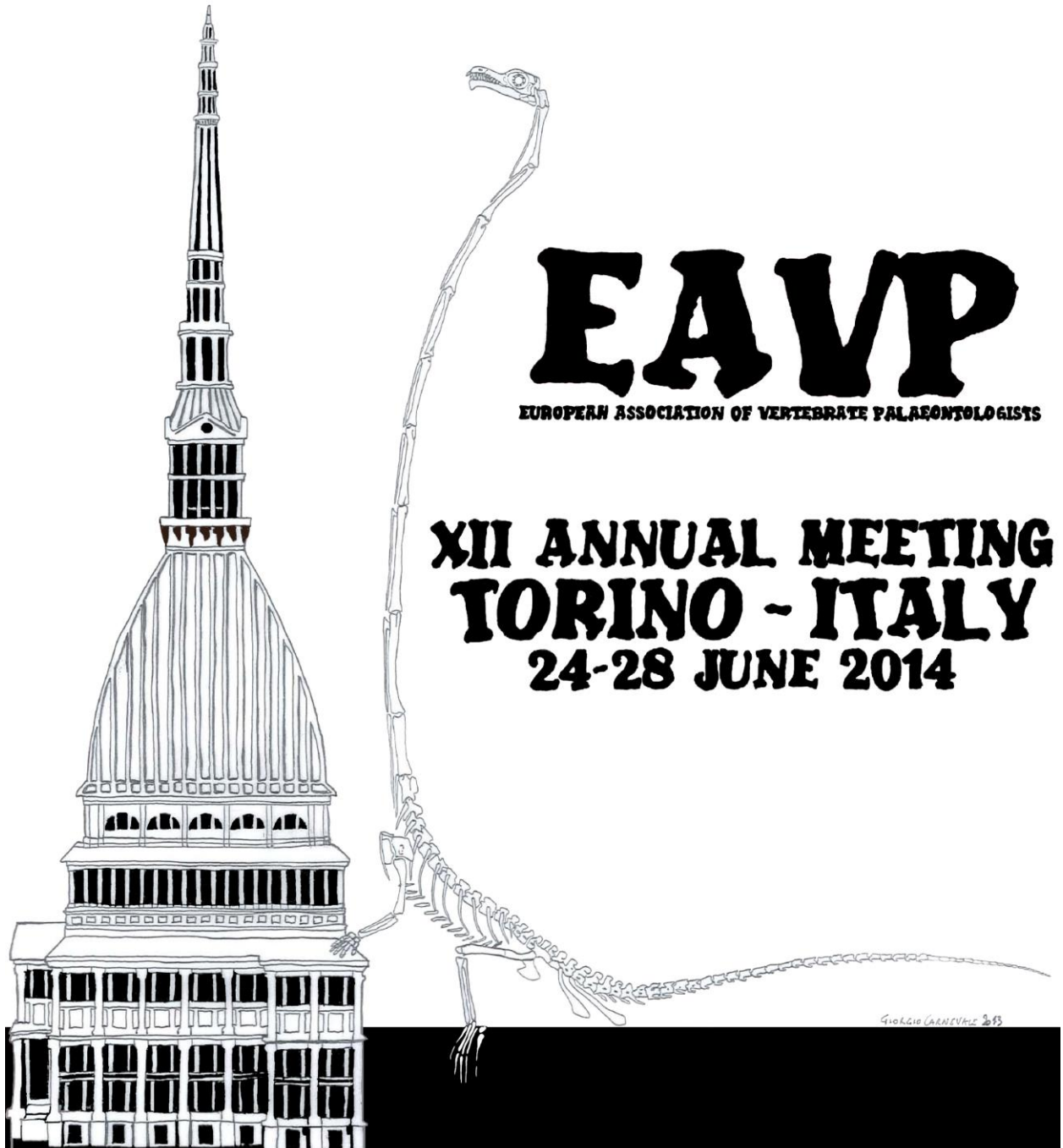


# **Abstract Book and Field Trip Guide**



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**(editors)**

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## THE FOSSIL AVIFAUNA FROM THE LATE MIDDLE MIOCENE LOCALITY GRATKORN, AUSTRIA

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A rich vertebrate fauna was excavated during the last decade at the locality Gratkorn in south-eastern Austria, (federal state of Styria). The locality yielded one of the richest vertebrate faunas of the late Middle Miocene (~12.2-12.0 Ma) of Central Europe (Gross et al. 2011, 2014), dominated by fossils of mammals, reptiles and subordinate amphibians; fossils of fishes and birds are only sparsely represented.

The fossil avifauna from Gratkorn is documented only by isolated elements – 13 bones and two claws – most of them fragmentary, which hampers systematic determinations. However, at least three taxa of galliforms (Phasianidae) and a mousebird (Coliidae) could be identified.

*Miogallus altus* is the largest phasianid in the Miocene of Europe and is closest related to peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*) (Ballmann 1976); a middle sized quail represents cf. *Palaeocryptonyx edwardsi*; remains of a small sized quail are identifiable only on generic level as cf. *Palaeocryptonyx* sp.; another small-sized galliform bone fragment seems not to belong to the small-sized cf. *Palaeocryptonyx* sp., but might represent a fourth taxon.

Noteworthy is the presence of mousebirds, which are only very rarely proven in the Miocene of Europe, and which are restricted today to the African continent south to the Sahara. The fossils from Gratkorn were identified here as *Necornis* cf. *palustris*.

Due to the fragmentary preservation of all bird remains from Gratkorn most of the systematic affiliation determinations have to be made under reserve (cf.). Some more bird fossils were too fragmentary to be systematically determined.

All identifiable taxa are typical terrestrial birds; there is no evidence of any aquatic bird taxon in the fossil record of Gratkorn so far. Also no remains of birds of prey (especially owls) are detected to date, which are stressed (Prieto et al. (2010a, 2014), Gross et al. (2011)) to explain the extreme local concentration of small vertebrate fossils found in Gratkorn as the result of pellet accumulations at feeding/resting places.

All of these fossil bird taxa are described for the first time in Austrian deposits (Göhlich & Gross 2014).

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