

## A RIVER FAUNA FROM THE ARABIAN DESERT: LATE MIOCENE FOSSILS FROM THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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Renewed fieldwork efforts since 2003 have produced new fossil specimens from the Baynunah Formation, exposed in the Western Region of Abu Dhabi Emirate, United Arab Emirates. Previous work had established that the Baynunah fossils are between 8 to 6 Ma in age, comprising Asiatic, European, and African elements including bovids, hippopotamids, carnivores, proboscideans, equids, turtles, fish, and a cercopithecoid primate. Among these were described a new genus and species of gerbil, *Abudhabia baynunensis*, and a new species of equid, *Hipparion abudhabiense*, the latter of which may also be present among the Chad late Miocene hominid fauna. Some of the more significant recent discoveries from the Baynunah Formation include additional and abundant remains of fossil proboscideans such as the primitive elephantid *Stegotetrabelodon syrticus*, a partial skeleton of the giraffid *Palaeotragus germaini*, a giant synsacrum belonging to a previously undescribed ratite, and large exposures of mud-cracked carbonate beds preserving footprints of proboscideans. Additionally, the Baynunah Formation is rich in fossil eggshell of the ratite *Diamantornis laini*, which, by way of correlation to the Nawata Formation at Lothagam, Kenya, suggests the age of the Baynunah fauna may be no younger than 6.5Ma. Renewed work on the Baynunah Formation, including paleomagnetostratigraphic and palynological analyses, is expected to provide increased chronostratigraphic resolution while continuing to expand the faunal list.

*Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology* **28**: (3) 53A