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FOSSIL FELIDAE (GENUS METAILURUS) IN THE MIOCENE OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Fossil Felidae of the genus *Metailurus* are widely known in Miocene deposits of Eurasia and Africa and were part of the Hipparion faunas of Vallesia and Turoly.

The earliest finds of fossil *Metailurus* in the Republic of Moldova are known from the Vallesian Hipparion fauna of Calfa (Middle Sarmatian, Calfin faunal complex, MN9; 12.0-10.8 Ma) - *Metailurus pamiri* (Ozansoy, 1965). The material is represented by the right branch of the lower jaw of the juvenile with dp3-dp4, m1, and alveolus p2, as well as isolated teeth and postcranial skeleton bones. *Metailurus cf. parvulus* Hensel 1862, a characteristic species for the hipparion faunas of the Late Sarmatian (locality of Poksesti, Poksesti faunal complex, MN 10.7-8.7 Ma) and Meotis (Early to Middle Turonian) appears in Late Vallesian. Fossil material was found during excavations in Poksesti in 2012 and is represented by a complete lower jaw of an adult.

Metailurus cf. parvulus is known from a number of localities of hypparion faunas of Meotis: *M. cf. parvulus* (=*Machairodus schlosseri* Weith.) from a locality near Cimislia (MN 12; 8.0 Ma) and *M. parvulus* (= *Machairodus parvulus* Hens.) from a locality near Taraclia (MN 12; 8.0 Ma).

In the Early Pliocene the composition of faunal complexes significantly changes and the semi-sabre-toothed Felidae of the genus *Metailurus* are replaced by representatives of the genus *Dinofelis*, found in a number of localities of Pliocene age of the Republic of Moldova.

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