

FOSSIL *URSUS* REPORTED AS EARLY MAN IN LOUISIANA

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In early 1951, certain Louisiana newspapers carried a story reporting the discovery of "Neanderthal man—an 11 foot tall ancestor of modern man—that lived in North America about 50,000 years ago." (States Times, Baton Rouge, Vol. 109, No. 8, Jan. 9, 1951, page 1; and Morning Advocate, Baton Rouge, Vol. 26, No. 189, Jan. 9, 1951, page 10). Whereas misidentifications of fossil mammals are hardly novel, unwarranted notarizations detract from the more conceivably authentic reports of early man in the lower Mississippi Valley; especially the as yet unresolved classical reports from Avery Island, Louisiana, and Natchez, Mis-

issippi, in which human remains and/or artifacts were taken with assemblages of Pleistocene vertebrates (Hay, 1923; 1924).

Remains of a large mammal uncovered by a bulldozer operator gathering gravel near Sicily Island, Catahoula Parish, Louisiana, on December 27, 1950, were collected by Dr. James C. Morgan and a group of other geologists from Louisiana State University. The remains were found approximately 15 feet below the surface of what appears to be a Pleistocene terrace (Figure 1). Unfortunately, the poor mapping of terraces in this area of Louisiana makes determination of a specific Pleistocene stage infeasible, though



Figure 1. Site of collection of a fossil *Ursus*, collected approximately 5 miles west of Sicily Island, Catahoula Parish, Louisiana. (LSU No. 8131)

the condition of the bone, and the consolidated nature of the matrix do not suggest a very recent date. The high carbonate content of the matrix and the presence of several gastropods suggests a backwater swamp environment, not unlike the modern habitat of the black bear in the southeastern states (Sherwood Gagliano, personal communication).

The material was submitted to the U. S. National Museum by L. S. U. authorities in 1951, and was identified as *Euarctos* (= *Ursus*) *americanus*. Recent finds of *Tremarctos* in Florida (Kurtén, 1966) suggested review of this material and this brief report, the first published report of *Ursus* from the Pleistocene of Louisiana.

The material examined (L.S.U. Dept. of Geology, Paleontological Collection No. 8131) includes the following elements: left astragalus, patella, distal portions of right and left femora, proximal ends of the right and left tibiae, tarsal and metatarsal elements, glenoid process of the scapula, four caudal and one thoracic vertebrae. Although larger than many Recent and fossil specimens of *Ursus americanus* from southeast U. S. examined, the fossil material falls within the size range of the species, and is identical in all morphological features.

Comparison with several specimens of Florida *Tremarctos* (U.F. 9060; 9027; 9099E; 9099J; 9099H; 9010; 9067; 9028) in the Florida State Museum reveals a number of minor but consistent differences. The overall size of the femur is smaller than in *Tremarctos*; the intercondyloid fossa is more narrow, and the lateral and medial condyles are shorter and more narrow. A process for muscle attachment on the popliteal surface of the proximal end of the femur and two lateral indentations on the lateral condyle of the femur are present only in the Louisiana specimen and the specimens of *Ursus* examined. The patella surface of the femur of the Louisiana specimen is more elevated and elongated than that of *Tremarctos*. The astragalus, though smaller than that of *Tremarctos*, has a longer neck, the head is shorter and more curved, and the sulcus tali is less curved (Figure 2).

The Pleistocene localities nearest Sicily Island from which *U. americanus* have been reported are: Natchez, Adams County, Mis-

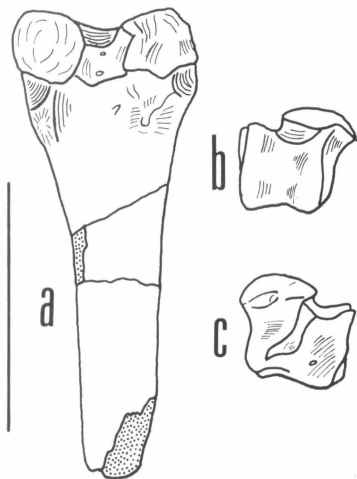


Figure 2. Diagnostic elements of fossil *Ursus* (LSU 8131) from Sicily Island, Louisiana: Posterior view of left femur (a); astragalus viewed from above and below (b and c). Vertical scale = 10 cm.

issippi and Claiborne County, Mississippi (Hay, 1923; 1924). An isolated canine referred to *Ursus* has been collected on a canal spoil bank at Avery Island, Iberia Parish, Louisiana, in association with remains of extinct vertebrates, and will be reported with that fauna. The proximal head ulna of a fossil *Ursus* has also been collected in West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, as part of an extensive unreported Quaternary fauna. Although fossil *Ursus* are known from other localities in southeastern United States, these are the first reports of the genus from Louisiana.

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REFERENCES CITED

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MUREX (SIRATUS) DENEGATUS JUNG, NEW NAME

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Emily H. Vokes of Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana, kindly informs me that *Murex (Siratus) triangularis* Jung (1965, Bull. Amer. Paleontology, v. 49, no. 223, p. 522, pl. 69, fig. 9; pl. 70, figs. 1, 2) from the upper middle Miocene of the Paraguana Peninsula, Venezuela, is preoccupied by *Murex triangularis* Brown (in Thomas Allen, 1818, Trans. Roy. Soc. Edinburgh, v. 8, p.

462, pl. 9, fig. 18), presumably sub-Recent, St. Hospice Peninsula, east of Nice, France; and, *Murex triangularis* Risso (1826, Histoire naturelle des principales productions de l'Europe méridionale, v. 4, p. 196), Recent and sub-Recent, neighborhood of Nice, France. As a substitute name, *Murex (Siratus) denegatus*, is here proposed.

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