

The Pleistocene rhinoceroses of Mediterranean Europe and the Massif Central (France)

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The present study concerns Pleistocene European rhinos. Four species of the genus *Stephanorhinus* occur at twenty sites scattered throughout Mediterranean Europe and the Massif Central. These species are *S. etruscus* (Senèze and Cagnes-sur-Mer), *S. hundsheimensis* (Sainzelles, Ceyssegues, Soleilhac, Durfort, Vallonnet cave, Tour de Grimaldi and Isernia), *S. hemitoechus* (Caune de l'Arago, Mars cave, Orgnac 3, Baume Bonne, Terra Amata, Prince cave, Cavillon cave, Observatoire cave and Barma Grande) and *S. kirchbergensis* (Aldène, Prince Cave and the Grotte des Enfants).

Vallonnet, Isernia La Pineta and Caune de l'Arago have provided particularly important contributions to our knowledge of European rhinos. They have yielded the remains of a small *S. hundsheimensis*, an advanced *S. hunds-*

heimensis and of *S. hemitoechus*, respectively.

Morphological and biometric characteristics are outlined, in order to illustrate the differences between, and the evolutionary trends of, each species. *Stephanorhinus etruscus* is characterised by a steady decrease in size through time. In contrast, both *S. hundsheimensis* and *S. hemitoechus* exhibit irregular size modifications: small Early Pleistocene *S. hundsheimensis* representatives are followed by larger Middle Pleistocene ones, whereas *S. hemitoechus* shows a marked fluctuation in size, with the archaic and most recent forms both being larger than the intervening ones. Rhinos can thus be useful biochronological tools, provided that they are considered within their faunal contexts and not in isolation.