

## Program and Abstracts



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# **SOCIETY OF VERTEBRATE PALEONTOLOGY ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS SEVENTY-FIRST ANNUAL MEETING**

**PARIS LAS VEGAS HOTEL  
LAS VEGAS, NV, USA  
NOVEMBER 2–5, 2011**

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*Stephanorhinus* cf. *hundsheimensis* from Kurtan,  
a new Early Pleistocene site in the Lori Plateau, Armenia.  
Implications for the biogeography of Rhinocerotidae

**MKRTCHYAN, Ruzan**, Yerevan State University, Yerevan, Armenia  
**BELMAKER, Miriam**, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA, USA  
**HYNEK, Scott**, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT, USA  
**BELYAEVA, Elena**, University of St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg, Russia  
**ASLANIAN, Stepan**, Center of Political and Strategic Research, St. Petersburg, Russia

The genus *Stephanorhinus* is a rhinocerotid known from the Plio-Pleistocene of Eurasia and has been used as a biochronological marker. Compared to its relative abundance in Western Europe, specimens from the Caucasus are relatively rare.

Here we present preliminary results from a new locality, Kurtan, with evidence for an early presence of *Stephanorhinus* cf. *hundsheimensis*.

Situated in the Lori Plateau of Armenia is the new stratified site, Kurtan.

The fossil bearing sediments contain pedogenic carbonates and overlie a pumiceous volcanic ash bed, which has been dated at  $1.49 \pm 0.01$  Ma by  $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$  laser fusion of single sanidine crystals. At its base, this ash bed is in erosional contact with vesicular basalt. The western wall of the Kurtan quarry is directly overlain by a fine-grained volcanic ash bed for which a zircon U-Pb date of  $1.371 \pm 0.022$  Ma has been obtained.

The site yielded a small lithic assemblage attributed to the Early-Middle Acheulian tradition dated to ca. 1.0-0.8 Ma.

Fossils from Kurtan include lower dentition referable to *Stephanorhinus* cf. *hundsheimensis*. The taxon differs from *S. etruscus*, dated to 1.6-1.2 Ma, as well as from younger specimens attributed to *S. hundsheimensis* (= *S. brachycephalus*), that post-date 0.8 Ma. Instead, specimens resemble older populations from Pietrafitta, Italy, dated to the Farneta faunal unit ca. 1.6-1.2 Ma, and which combines features of both taxa assigned to *Stephanorhinus* cf. *hundsheimensis*.

This study sheds light on the biogeography of the taxon and suggests a wider distribution than previously assumed.