BAROVÁ JESKYNĚ: POKRAČOVÁNÍ PALEONTOLOGICKÉHO VÝZKUMU – SONDA POD ŽEBŘÍKEM

BAROVÁ CAVE: THE PALAEONTOLOGICAL RESEARCH GOES ON – UNDER THE LADDER TEST PIT

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Abstract


Barová Cave: the Palaeontological Research goes on – Under the Ladder Test Pit

The excavations in Barová Cave, started after a large slide of sediments upon the Shaft II in 2011, have still continued. As the following landslides and collapsing of underlying beds still threat the locality, and the fossiliferous sediments of Late Pleistocene bones remain rich in bone numbers, the new excavation site had been opened in 2012. The new test pit here (named Under the Ladder) had been found as surprisingly undamaged with previous digging activities. To prevent the collapse of the richest bone sediments, the sector 4 has been totally excavated and bone finds are processed in Moravian Museum.

Osteological material from sector 4 has been analysed, about one third of all bone remains up today, 682 totally, 388 had been determined. Here seven taxa were found: Cave bear from Ursus spelaeus group (Ursus ex gr. spelaeus) as dominant, cave lion (Panthera spelaea), hyena (Crocuta crocuta spelaea) and wolf (Canis lupus) as recessive, chamois (Rupicapra rupicapra), reindeer (Rangifer tarandus) and red deer (Cervus sp.) as rare, represented by one find each. Frequency of individual parts of cave bear skeletons does not implicate any sign of sorting or separation caused by scavengers or other natural processes (weather, individual bone dropping, sorting during transport etc.). The number of individual bones corresponds with their frequency in skeletons. Numbered bones occurred in higher numbers, as well as more easily determined fragments (e.g. cranials). Osteological material belonging to the cave bear (U. ex. gr. spelaeus) represents bone remains of at least sixteen individuals, nine adults, one subadult and six juveniles. Other bone remains show presence of at least two individuals of wolf (Canis lupus), one individual of hyena (Crocuta c. spelaea), chamois (Rupicapra rupicapra), reindeer (Rangifer tarandus) and red deer (Cervus sp.). Cave lion (Panthera spelaea) bone remains were determined urgently, exploiting all material of sector 4 (as other species were determined from about one third of all material), so the number of individuals reached at least two for sector 4, and three for up today processed part of Under the Ladder test pit. Osteological analysis showed, that most of Barová Cave bone material is homogenous in origin and history. Despite outnumbered in total number, the bones of the cave lion (Panthera spelaea) remain here (Under the Ladder test pit) the most numerous of all lion finds in Barová ever before. As previous excavations had brought 38 bones up today, belonging to at least three individuals, the new ones, processed in Under the Ladder test pit, offered 101 cave lion bones belonging to another no less than three individuals. Most of these bones, probably no less than 75, including slightly damaged skull with both mandibles, are now believed to belong to one individual skeleton, the subadult female found partially in anatomical position. It is to be presumed, that this skeleton lied (almost completely in natural position) on the in-cave surface before the movements of underlying sediments transported it to the final spot. Although slightly chewed (4 bones have such traces, including two caudal vertebræ), there is no sign, that the carcass could be transported to the cave by scavengers. Traces on the bone surface show more the wolf (Canis lupus), than the hyena (Crocuta c. spelaea). These carnivorous mammals probably did not share the space of Barová Cave with lions or bears, as they changed there in time. The question of lion predation on hibernating bears is still open, however, such behaviour could not be very frequent at least.