

CRYPTOTIS PARVA FROM THE PLEISTOCENE OF NEW MEXICO

Study of Pleistocene cave faunas in southern New Mexico has revealed presence of *Cryptotis parva* (Say) at two localities: Dry Cave, Eddy County, and Howells Ridge Cave, Grant County.

Dry Cave lies in rolling limestone country some 12 mi. W Carlsbad; elevation at the mouth of the cave is 4200 feet. The biota is ecotonal between Lower and Upper Sonoran life zones. For a general description of the area, the cave, and the fossiliferous deposits, see Harris (Texas J. Sci., 22:3–27, 1970). Three dentaries of *C. parva* (MALB 4–1218, 4–1229, 4–1230) are available, all from Museum of Arid Land Biology fossil locality no. 4. A C¹⁴ date on bone from the immediate area is 10,730 ± 150 BP (1-6200). The associated fauna is pluvial in nature, including both extralimital taxa (for example, *Lagurus*, *Microtus*, *Sorex*) and extinct faunal elements such as horse and camel (a more complete list is given by Harris, *op. cit.*).

Howells Ridge Cave is in a northwestern outlier of the Little Hatchet Mountains at an elevation of approximately 5500 feet; it too lies in the ecotone between the Upper Sonoran and Lower Sonoran life zones. Most faunal elements appear to have been deposited by raptorial birds nesting in a gallery above the deposits; deposition is continuing at present. Birds from this site have been reported by Howard (Condor, 64:241–242, 1962). *Cryptotis parva* is represented by four dentaries (MALB 32–1, 32–2, 32–3, 32–24) in this deposit. The associated fauna includes many taxa present in the area (*Dipodomys*, *Perognathus*, *Notiosorex*, and others), but also includes a large, varied microtine fauna (R. A. Smartt, Late Pleistocene and Recent *Microtus* from south-central and southwestern New Mexico,

M.S. thesis, Univ. Texas, El Paso, 99 pp., 1972). Two of the microtine species (*Microtus pennsylvanicus* and *M. ochrogaster*) are predominately grassland creatures; their presence, along with *Cryptotis* and *Cynomys ludovicianus*, seems to document an extension of reasonably lush grassland across the lowlands of southern New Mexico in latest Pleistocene times. As available moisture decreased at the end of the Pleistocene, the grassland dwellers requiring more mesic conditions became locally extinct (*M. ochrogaster* and *C. parva*) or restricted to a few scattered refugia in Chihuahua and New Mexico (*M. pennsylvanicus*). Species better adapted to more xeric conditions lived on into historic times (*Cynomys ludovicianus*).

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