

RAPID RADIATION OF LACERTID LIZARDS (SQUAMATA, SCINCOMORPHA) IN THE OLIGOCENE OF FRANCE

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Climate change largely impacted the diversity of squamates. During the relatively cold climate of the Oligocene, a faunal transition from old Eocene to modern Miocene faunas took place. The crown group of Lacertidae is assumed to have originated in the Eocene of central western Europe. Material from four Oligocene localities in France (Coderet, La Colombière, Roqueprune 2 and Mas de Got B) provides new information about diversity and coexistence of lacertid species shortly after the origin of the clade. Based on morphological characters such as the differences in tooth size and the presence or absence of dermal ornamentation, six different morphotypes could be identified in the Chattian deposits of Coderet and La Colombière, whereas for the Rupelian localities Roqueprune 2 and Mas de Got B four morphotypes were determined. Some of the morphotypes occur at both chronostratigraphic stages. Several lacertid species are known from the Oligocene in France, including the Gallotiinae *Pseudeumeces cadurcensis* and *Dracaenosaurus croizeti*, and species of unclear systematic placement within the family (*"Lacerta" filholi*, *Mediolacerta roceki*, *Plesiolacerta lydekkeri*, *Escampcerta amblyodonta*, *Gracilicerta sindexi*, *Quercycerta maxima* and *Hugueneysaurus globidens*). *M. roceki*, *D. croizeti*, *H. globidens* and *"L." filholi* were already described from the localities studied herein, but only *M. roceki* and *"L." filholi* resemble some of our morphotypes. Therefore, lacertid diversity in the Oligocene of France was likely higher than previously recognized. The high diversity at an early stage after the Eocene/Oligocene extinction event indicates that Lacertidae underwent a rapid radiation soon after their origin.