

Paléontologie systématique (Paléontologie des vertébrés)

# *Oryctolagus giberti* n. sp. (Lagomorpha, Mammalia) du Pléistocène inférieur de Cueva Victoria (Murcie, Espagne)

Roger De Marfà

Departament d'Estratigrafia, Paleontologia i Geociències Marines, Universitat de Barcelona,  
C/Marti i Franques, s/n, 08028 Barcelona, Espagne

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Présenté par Philippe Taquet

## Résumé

Dans ce travail, une nouvelle espèce de léporidé (Lagomorpha, Mammalia) est décrite à partir du matériel du Pléistocène inférieur de Cueva Victoria (Murcie, Espagne). Cette espèce, nommée *Oryctolagus giberti* n. sp., présente plusieurs caractères intermédiaires entre le premier représentant du genre, *Oryctolagus laynensis*, du Pliocène moyen de Layna (Espagne), et le lapin européen actuel (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), surtout au niveau du palais, de la mandibule, de la troisième prémolaire inférieure, de l'ulna, du coxal et du fémur. À cet égard, *Oryctolagus giberti* n. sp. est un candidat sérieux pour occuper la place phylogénétique vacante entre ces deux espèces de lapins, mais il permet aussi de discuter les résultats des études moléculaires qui estiment que la divergence entre les groupes A et B d'*Oryctolagus cuniculus* s'est produite il y a environ 2 Ma. **Pour citer cet article : R. De Marfà, C. R. Palevol 7 (2008).** © 2008 Académie des sciences. Publié par Elsevier Masson SAS. Tous droits réservés.

## Abstract

***Oryctolagus giberti* n. sp. (Lagomorpha, Mammalia) from the Lower Pleistocene of Cueva Victoria (Murcia, Spain).** A new species of leporid (Lagomorpha, Mammalia) is described based on the material from the Lower Pleistocene of Cueva Victoria (Murcia, Spain). This species, named *Oryctolagus giberti* n. sp., presents several intermediate characters between the first known representative of the genus, *O. laynensis*, from the Middle Pliocene of Spain, and the modern European rabbit (*O. cuniculus*), specially at the level of the palate, the mandible, the third lower premolar, the ulna, the coxal and the femur. In this respect, *Oryctolagus giberti* n. sp. is a firm candidate to occupy the vacant phylogenetic place between these two species. It also questions the results of molecular studies that date the divergence of groups A and B of *Oryctolagus cuniculus* at about 2 Myr ago. **To cite this article: R. De Marfà, C. R. Palevol 7 (2008).**

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**Mots clés :** Espagne ; Cueva Victoria ; Pléistocène inférieur ; Lagomorpha ; Systématique

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## Abridged English version

### Introduction

Cueva Victoria is a karstic cave located at San Ginés de la Jara (Cartagena, Murcia, Spain) (Fig. 1). This loca-

Adresse e-mail : [demarfa@ub.edu](mailto:demarfa@ub.edu).

lity is very well known by its abundant fossil fauna, including human remains and those of *Theropithecus* cf. *oswaldi*, an African baboon [6,16,18].

During the Plio-Pleistocene, this cavity opened outside and was filled by a fossiliferous breccia formed by the accumulation of detrital materials and vertebrate bones, interpreted to have been introduced by carnivores [13,15,18]. The dating of these sediments of Cueva Victoria arose numerous discussions and remains controversial. According to the first dating based on biostratigraphic data, the estimated age would be near to 1.4 Myr, and later studies of palaeomagnetism indicated an age older than the positive polarity event of Jaramillo, so that the age can be between 1.8 and 1.0 Myr [18].

In Cueva Victoria were found numerous fossil rests belonging to fishes, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals [1,3,18]. So, identified mammal species include *Canis etruscus*, *Homotherium crenatidens*, *Pachyrocota brevisrostris*, *Ursus* cf. *etruscus*, *Hippopotamus antiquus*, *Megaloceros* sp., *Stephanorhinus etruscus*, *Equus granatensis*, *Mammuthus meridionalis*, *Monachus* sp., *Theropithecus* cf. *oswaldi* [16], *Homo* sp. [6,17,18], *Prolagus* cf. *calpensis*, *Erinaceus* cf. *europaeus*, *Crociodura* sp., *Hystrix* aff. *major*, *Allophaiomys chalinei*, *Allocricetus bursae*, *Apodemus mystacinus*, *Castillomys crusafonti*, *Eliomys quercinus*, *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, and *Myotis myotis* [1,18].

Considering lagomorphs (Mammalia), the interest of the material of Cueva Victoria is remarkable, as leporid remains are numerous and their age places them between the first representatives of *Oryctolagus* [19] and the oldest known fossil record of the modern species (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) [21]. The new species described herein adds relevant information to discuss the age of divergence between groups A and B of modern European rabbits, which has been calculated based on molecular data [2].

### Systematics

Order LAGOMORPHA Brandt, 1855  
 Family LEPORIDAE Gray, 1821  
*Oryctolagus giberti* n. sp.

### Derivatio nominis

The name of the species derives from the name of palaeontologist Dr. Josep Josep Gibert i Cloles (1941–2007), who enthusiastically worked in Cueva Victoria for several years of his life.

### Locality

Cueva Victoria (Murcia, Spain).

### Geological age

Lower Pleistocene.

### Holotype

Left coxal (MGB-6288) deposited in the collection of the Museu de Ciències Naturals de la Ciutadella of Barcelona (Spain).

### Paratypes

Maxillars (v6114, v6342), mandibles (v6155, v6225, v6227, v6231, v6232, v6233, v6338, v6339), third lower premolars (v6188, v6189, v6200, v6232, v6233, v6338), humeri (v6196, v6215, v6223), radii (v6210), ulnae (v6189, v6209, v6248, v6285), coxals (v6182, v6241, v6246), femurs (v6118, v6185, v6190, v6247, v6277, v6279), tibiae (v6199, v6216, v6242, v6281, v6619), calcaneus (v6074, v6149) and metatarsals (v6077, v6085, v6086, v6089, v6090, v6091, v6200) deposited in the collection of the Museu de Ciències Naturals de la Ciutadella of Barcelona (Spain).

### Diagnosis

Rabbit similar to *O. laynensis* [19], but with some characters closer to those of *O. cuniculus*. The coxal has a short and robust ischion, and the auricular surface is wide and V-shaped. The middle trochanter of the femur is strong and the third trochanter is placed in a high position. On the other hand, the relationship between the length of the palatal bridge and the width of choanas is superior to 1. In the upper molariforms (P3, P4, M1, M2), the hypoflex penetrates a little bit more than half the width of the tooth. On the mandible, the gonial edge is finer than that of *O. laynensis*, and the mental foramen is big and is located very near to the third lower premolar (p3). This tooth presents a morphology identical to that of *O. cuniculus*, with big anteroconids and an anteroflexid that penetrates vertically and, in general, has convergent edges inward of the tooth.

### Description

The palatal bridge of specimen 6114 is 6.35 mm long and it is formed by 1/3 parts of palatine and by 2/3 parts of maxillary bone (Fig. 2). The width of the choanas is 5.78 mm, and the rostral extremity of the zygomatic is well developed. On the other hand, the length of the upper cheektooth row is 14.35 mm. The first upper premolars (P2) are ellipsoidal and have three deep flexes (Fig. 3). The paraflex is oblique and deeper than the mesoflex and the hypoflex. In the upper molariforms (Mi), the hypoflex penetrates a little bit more than half the width of the tooth. On the mandible, the gonial edge is relatively thin and the mental foramen is large, with a distance between it and

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