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Transfer of the Cretaceous fossil vertebrate collection from Columbus State University to the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History

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Since 1979, D.R. Schwimmer and colleagues have amassed a significant collection of Cretaceous vertebrate fossils from the Santonian- and Campanian-age Eutaw, Blufftown, and Cussetta formations in Alabama and Georgia, USA. Because outcrops (and therefore vertebrate fossils) tend to be relatively scarce in eastern North America, these specimens form an important record of marine and terrestrial vertebrate (including dinosaur) occurrences in this region. Some discoveries have brought to light new species (e.g., Schwimmer et al., 1994; Case et al., 2001; Carr et al., 2005), whereas others have documented range extensions (Case and Schwimmer, 1988; Schwimmer et al., 2002) and paleoecological interactions (Schwimmer et al., 1997a, 2015; Harrell and Schwimmer, 2010; Schwimmer, 2010). They have also clarified the taxonomy and biogeography of several Late Cretaceous taxa (Schwimmer et al., 1997b, 2002; Schwimmer, 2002).

For the past four decades, these materials have been housed in the Paleontology Collections of the current Department of Earth and Space Sciences at Columbus State University (formerly Columbus College), Columbus, Georgia, USA, where they were catalogued and published under the acronyms CCK (Columbus College, Cretaceous collection) and CSUK (Columbus State University, Cretaceous collection) and made available for study to qualified researchers. In order to provide for their long-term conservation, care, and access, the present authors agreed to permanently transfer them to the fossil vertebrate collections of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History (NMNH/USNM).

This note documents the completed transfer of these important specimens (as of January 2023), under USNM acquisitions 2087596 and 2091523. All specimens have received unique new USNM catalog numbers (see Supplementary Table 1), listed here along with their original CSUK/CCK catalog numbers (note that where different CSUK/CCK numbers had been applied to specimens pertaining to a single individual, only one USNM number has been given). Several holotypes representing members of Euselachii are now housed within the NMNH type collection; all other specimens have been added to the appropriate taxonomic or faunal subdivision of the NMNH collections. Several lots of fossil teeth, bones, and shells also are included in this transfer (each lot has received a single USNM catalog number pending future study).

We would also like to formally record that in 2012, 36 specimens of Cretaceous fossil fishes from the CSUK/CCK collections were transferred to the American Museum of Natural History, including the holotype of the giant coelacanth *Megalocoelacanthus dobiei* Schwimmer, Stewart, and Williams, 1994. These specimens are listed in Supplementary Table 2.

Lastly, we take this opportunity to clarify a few minor discrepancies in the original numbering system. Many specimens reported in Case et al. (2001) were published in a series starting with CSUK-97-2; in fact, these should have used the series CSUK-97-3, which explains the apparent duplication of specimen numbers between that paper and Hooks et al. (1999). Some inconsistencies between numbers reported in Schwimmer (1986) and Case and Schwimmer (1988) are also rectified herein (see Supplementary Table 1).

Researchers interested in accessing these materials should contact the Department of Paleobiology, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution via the online collections access form: https://naturalhistory.si.edu/research/paleobiology/collections-access.

Declaration of competing interests

The authors declare none.

Data availability statement

Data available from the Zenodo Digital Repository: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8400374.

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