

The Early Eocene bird *Gallinuloides wyomingensis* - a stem group representative of Galliformes

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We identified a second, perfectly preserved skeleton of the earliest known galliform bird, *Gallinuloides wyomingensis* Eastman. The new specimen clearly shows that *G. wyomingensis* does not belong to crown group Galliformes as assumed by earlier authors. In particular, the primitive presence of a deeply excavated, concave facies articularis scapularis at the coracoid precludes the inclusion of *G. wyomingensis* into crown group Galliformes. *Gallinuloides wyomingensis* is morphologically very similar to *Paraortygoides messelensis* Mayr, a nearly contemporaneous galliform from Messel, Germany. The exclusive presence of stem group galliform birds in pre-Oligocene deposits does not support the Gondwanan origin of Galliformes as evidenced by the Southern Hemisphere distribution of basal crown group members (Megapodiidae and Cracidae).

Key words: Aves, Galliformes, *Gallinuloides*, *Paraortygoides*, Green River Formation, Eocene.

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