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A diminutive pterosaur from the uppermost Maastrichtian chalk of Denmark

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A fragment of pterosaur finger bone was found in the chalk in the uppermost Maastrichtian, Højerup Member of the Møns Klint Formation strata of Holtug quarry at the UNESCO World Heritage site Stevns Klint. This represents the first record of this group from the chalk of Denmark. The specimen is identified a fragment of a left proximal phalanx 1 of digit IV by comparison with similar elements showing the overall three-pronged expression of the posterior, ventral and olecranon processes. The dimensions of the specimen shows that small-bodied pterosaurs with a wingspan of less than 50 cm persisted through to the last 50 000–60 000 years of the Cretaceous. It overlaps in size with contemporaneous birds, rejecting previous hypotheses that Late Cretaceous pterosaurs and birds avoided competition through size-based niche partitioning.

Key words: Pterosauria, Denmark, Maastrichtian, Cretaceous, Stevns Klint.

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