

Unique anatomy of lagomorph calcaneus

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Acta Palaeontologica Polonica 47 (1), 2002: 181-183

The mammalian order Lagomorpha (hares, rabbits, pikas) comprises two families (Ochotonidae and Leporidae; McKenna and Bell 1998; Nowak 1999), and Recent members have a nearly world-wide distribution (Hoffman 1993; Nowak 1999). Detailed examination of the pedal morphology of extant and fossil lagomorphs revealed a unique channel (the "calcaneal canal") running diagonally through the lagomorph calcaneus. The ancientness, ubiquity, and appearance of the calcaneal canal in all, including the earliest recognized lagomorph calcanea, and its absence from the pedes of other mammalian taxa, may indicate a long evolutionary separation of lagomorphs from other, previously suggested lagomorph relatives.

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