




Two New Species of Fossil *Leggadina* (Rodentia: Muridae) from Northwestern Queensland

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Only three species of fossil murine have been described to date in Australia even though they are often found in fossil deposits and can be highly useful in understanding environmental change over time. Until now the genus *Leggadina*, a group of short-tailed mice that is particularly well adapted to an arid environment, was only known from two extant species: *L. forresti* and *L. lakedownensis*. Here two new fossil species of the genus are described from sites in northwestern Queensland. *Leggadina gregoriensis* sp. nov comes from the Pliocene ackham's Roost Site in the Riversleigh World Heritage Area and *Leggadina macrodonta* sp. nov is from the Plio-Pleistocene Site 5C at Floraville Station. The evolution of the genus *Leggadina* and the lineage's response to palaeoecological factors is considered. Taphonomy of the two fossil deposits is examined and shows marked differences in both faunal composition of the assemblages and preservation. Presence of *L. gregoriensis* in an early Pliocene deposit extends the known temporal range of the *Leggadina* lineage by over 4 million years. *L. macrodonta* displays an obvious increase in size of M^1 and M^2 , possibly explained by either environmental variability during the Pleistocene or body size increase.

34 based on molecular datasets and modelling, and to determine the relationships of fossil species to other
35 fossil and modern taxa (Wiens 2004).

36

37 There have only been three species of fossil murines described from Australia: *Pseudomys vandycki*
38 Godthelp, 1988, from the Pliocene-aged Chinchilla locality in southeastern Queensland, *Zyzomys*
39 *rackhami* Godthelp, 1997, from the Pliocene Rackham's Roost Site in the Riversleigh World Heritage 
40 Area in northwestern Queensland, and *Conilurus capricornensis* Cramb and Hocknull, 2010, from late
41 Pleistocene-Holocene cave deposits in eastern Queensland. There are a number of other fossil
42 specimens awaiting description (Aplin 2006).

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44 The first species to be described in the present study comes from the Riversleigh World Heritage Area
45 in northwestern Queensland, which preserves a rich diversity of fossil vertebrates in limestone rocks
46 from the late Oligocene to the late Pleistocene and Holocene (Archer *et al.* 1989; Archer *et al.* 2006;
47 Travouillon *et al.* 2006). The Rackham's Roost Site at Riversleigh is a breccia deposit in the floor of a
48 fossil cave situated in Cambrian limestone cliffs overlooking the Gregory River. This cave was
49 inhabited by a population of the Ghost Bat *Macroderma gigas* during the Pliocene (Hand 1996) 
50 Fossils found at this site include small mammals believed to be the prey of the Ghost Bat colony, and
51 occasionally larger animals which are believed to have fallen into the cave and been unable to escape
52 (Archer, Hand & Godthelp 1991). Rodent fossils found in this deposit represent at least 12 taxa,
53 namely from the genera *Pseudomys*, *Zyzomys* and *Leggadina* (Godthelp 2001), however only one
54 species (*Zyzomys rackhami*) has so far been described (Godthelp 1997).

55

56 Site 5C at Floraville Station in northwestern Queensland is quite different from Riversleigh's
57 Rackham's Roost Site. It contains a lower diversity of animals but a much greater cross-section of
58 body sizes. This deposit consists of sandy riverine sediments suggestive of a billabong or waterhole
59 (Rich *et al.* 1991). Rodent remains are thought to have been accumulated through natural mortality and
60 marsupial carnivores (H. Godthelp, pers. comm. 2013). The site is Plio-Pleistocene in age (Rich *et al.*
61 1991), a period that was characterised by great climatic fluctuations and subsequent unpredictability of
62 resources (Archer *et al.* 1998; Martin 2006). Site 5C contains specimens of the murine genera *Rattus*,
63 *Pseudomys* and *Leggadina*, with *Rattus* being by far the most dominant taxon (H. Godthelp, pers.
64 comm. 2013). No fossil rodent taxa have previously been described from Floraville.

65

66 The description of these two new species almost doubles the number of described fossil Australian
67 murines and will assist in developing a better understanding on the evolution of the murines in
68 Australia, including their initial migration.

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71 **Methods**

72 Fossil Australian murid specimens were recovered from the Rackham's Roost Site in the Riversleigh
73 World Heritage Area, northwestern Queensland, and Site 5C at Floraville Station, northwestern
74 Queensland. Rackham's Roost fossils were recovered by dissolving limestone breccia in 5% acetic
75 acid. Material from Site 5C was washed through fine screens to concentrate fossils which were later
76 extracted under a microscope. A number of fossils recovered at each site were identified as potentially
77 belonging to the genus *Leggadina*. Twenty-eight fossil specimens from Rackham's Roost and
78 seventeen fossil specimens from Floraville were analysed and are denoted by the prefix QM F
79 (Queensland Museum Fossil). These ranged from single upper molars to whole upper cheektooth rows.

80

81 Specimens from Rackham's Roost Site and Site 5C were first observed to confirm their status as
82 potential new species of the genus *Leggadina*. Univariate and bivariate analyses were conducted using
83 the statistical software program PAST (PALaeontological STatistics; Hammer, Harper & Ryan 2001) to
84 confirm that the two proposed fossil *Leggadina* species differ from others of the genus *Leggadina*.
85 Univariate analyses were conducted to determine the amount of variance within measurements on both
86 fossil and modern taxa using the Coefficient of Variation (CV). CV has been widely used to measure
87 the degree of variation within a sample. Simpson, Roe & Lewontin (1960) proposed that an adequate
88 sample has a variation between 4 and 10, with a score of less than 4 indicating an inadequate sample
89 and more than 10 suggesting more than one species. However, caution must be taken when using this
90 method because there are a number of external variables that can affect CV scores including small
91 sample size, geographic variation and sexual dimorphism (Plavcan & Cope 2001).

92

93 Bivariate plots compared molar crown length and width data of *Leggadina* specimens (two fossil
94 *Leggadina* specimens, *L. forresti* and *L. lakedownensis*) with closely related species from the
95 'Australian genera' as based on node W of Rowe *et al.*'s (2008) molecular phylogeny (*Zyromys*

96 *argurus*, *Pseudomys australis* and *Notomys fuscus*). *Mastacomys fuscus* was removed from the
97 bivariate analysis because its molar morphology diverges so dramatically in both size and cusp
98 arrangement that the fossil specimens collected from the two Queensland sites clearly do not belong to
99 this genus. Maximum crown length and width of molars was used as molar cusp position in rodent
100 species is highly variable, particularly with wear (Misonne 1969). Measurements were made at the
101 University of New South Wales on a Wild 5MA stereomicroscope with Wild MMS235 Digital Length
102 Measuring Set (accurate to 0.01mm) and at the Australian Museum on a Leica MZ95 stereomicroscope
103 with graticule (accurate to 0.05mm). Measurements were cross-checked to ensure comparability by
104 measuring a subset of specimens on both microscopes. Since M^3 or a molar row has yet to be
105 discovered for the Floraville *Leggadina*, bivariate plots for M^1 and M^2 were used to assess separation
106 of these murine species. *Leggadina lakedownensis* could not be included in the M^2 analysis as
107 specimens could not be obtained.

108

109 Once it was confirmed that the fossil specimens were definitely *Leggadina* and were distinct from *L.*
110 *forresti* and *L. lakedownensis*, they were described. Dental nomenclature used follows Musser and
111 Newcomb (1983) as outlined in their study on Malaysian murids (Fig. 1). This particular format has
112 been followed because it uses a simplified serial nomenclature that avoids potential issues of
113 conflicting homologies in the upper molars for muroid rodents (Musser and Newcomb 1983). A Wild
114 M3B stereomicroscope was used during the description. The description included only upper molar
115 specimens as they display greater interspecific variation than the lower molars and are therefore more
116 useful when identifying fossil species (Misonne 1969). Specimens were photographed using a
117 Scanning Electron Microscope (Quanta 200) at the University of New South Wales Analytical Centre.

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119

120 **Results**

121

122 **Univariate analyses**

123 Coefficients of Variation for all measurements of the fossil taxa suggest that only one species is present
124 in each fossil sample, with values ranging from 3.23 to 7.80 in the *Leggadina* specimens from
125 Rackham's Roost and 5.50 to 6.06 for the two measurements available for *Leggadina* specimens from
126 Site 5C (Supplementary Material).

127 **Bivariate analyses**

128 In the bivariate plots, both length and width of M¹ and M² were effective in separating species (Fig. 2
129 and 3). The M¹ plot shows the Rackham's Roost *Leggadina* overlapping with both modern *Leggadina*
130 species, whereas in the M² plot, the Rackham's Roost *Leggadina* groups predominately with the
131 Floraville specimen. The Floraville *Leggadina* species distinctly separates from other species based on
132 its greater M¹ length. *Pseudomys* and *Notomys* group together in both plots, but separate more in the
133 M² plot based on length data. In both plots there is a close association between the fossil specimens and
134 *Zyzomys*. More detailed morphological evidence effectively separates *Zyzomys* and the fossil
135 specimens.

136

137

138 **Differential Diagnosis**

139 The fossil species described below as referable to the genus *Leggadina* display characteristics typical
140 of species of this genus. An accessory cusp on the first upper molar is present on all fossil specimens,
141 all upper molars are inclined posteriorly, molar size is reduced along the row, with M³ often half the
142 size or smaller than M¹, and the anterior edge of the zygomatic plate is relatively straight (Watts &
143 Aslin 1981). However, bivariate analyses determined that these specimens could also have been
144 referred to the genus *Zyzomys*. Shared morphological features and differences between *Leggadina* and
145 *Zyzomys* are mentioned here (Fig. 4). *Zyzomys* species often display an accessory cusp on the first
146 upper molar, have a relatively straight anterior edge to the zygomatic plate, and are of similar size to
147 *Leggadina* (Watts & Aslin 1981). A feature clearly distinguishing species of the two genera is a buccal
148 row of cusps present in *Leggadina* species that is absent in *Zyzomys*. Although this buccal row of cusps
149 is present in *Leggadina* species, they are often reduced on M¹ (Tate 1951). A distinctive aspect of
150 *Leggadina* molar morphology, not shared by *Zyzomys*, is the posterior extension of the lingual series of
151 cusps. (Tate 1951). For these reasons, the fossil species are referred to the genus *Leggadina* rather than
152 *Zyzomys*.

153

154

155 **Systematics**

156

157

Superfamily MUROIDEA Miller and Gidley, 1918

158 Family MURIDAE Gray, 1821
159 Subfamily MURINAE Gray, 1821
160 Genus *LEGGADINA* Thomas, 1910
161

162 **Type species**

163 *Leggadina forresti* (Thomas, 1906)
164

165 **Other species**

166 *Leggadina lakedownensis* Watts, 1976
167

168 *Leggadina gregoriensis* sp. nov.

169 **Holotype**

170 QM F57259, partial right maxilla with M¹⁻³ (Fig. 5).
171

172 **Type locality and age**

173 Rackham's Roost Site, Riversleigh World Heritage Area, northwestern Queensland; Pliocene.
174

175 **Paratypes**

176 QM F57244, partial right maxilla with M¹ (Fig. 6); QM F57258, partial left maxilla including
177 zygomatic plate with M¹⁻² (Fig. 7).
178

179 **Etymology**

180 Named for the Gregory River which flows next to the Rackham's Roost Site.
181

182 **Diagnosis**

183 *Leggadina gregoriensis* differs from other species of the genus in the following combination of
184 features: greatly anteroposteriorly elongated T6 on M¹; T1-2 and T4-5 complexes oriented
185 buccolingually with T3 and T6 swept back at right-angles to lean proximally; accessory cusp small; M¹
186 narrow, M² and M³ wider; furrows present between lingual and central series of cusps in M¹ and M².
187 Furrows function as an additional occlusal surface for increased grinding precision during mastication
188 (Herring 1993).

189

190 **Referred specimens**

191 QM F57240, right M¹; QM F57241, left M¹ in partial maxilla; QM F57242, right M¹; QM F57243,
 192 right M¹; QM F57245, left M¹; QM F57246, right upper molar row in partial maxilla; QM F57247, left
 193 M² in partial maxilla; QM F57248, right M¹ and M² in partial maxilla; QM F57249, right M¹ and M² in
 194 partial maxilla; QM F57250, right M¹ and M²; QM F57251, right M¹ and M²; QM F57252, left M¹ and
 195 M²; QM F57253, right M¹⁻³ in partial maxilla; QM F57254, left M¹; QM F57255, left M¹ in partial
 196 maxilla; QM F57256, right M¹ and M² in partial maxilla; QM F57257, left M¹ and M² in partial
 197 maxilla; QM F57260, right M¹⁻³; QM F57261, right M¹; QM F57262, right M¹⁻³; QM F57263, right M¹
 198 and M²; QM F57264, left M¹ in partial maxilla; QM F57265, right M¹ in partial maxilla; QM F57283,
 199 left upper molar row; QM F39958, left M¹⁻³ (Table 1).

200

201 **Description**

202 M¹ large and elongated. M² approximately two-thirds the size of M¹. M³ smaller again, approximately
 203 half the size of M². Tooth row exhibits spiral torsion, M¹ straight with M² and M³ twisted slightly to
 204 the buccal edge. Furrow present between lingual series of cusps and central series of cusps in M¹ and
 205 M². Buccal series of cusps reduced along tooth row, central series of cusps enlarged. All cusps inclined
 206 posteriorly with minimal molar overlap.

207

208 **M¹**. Elongated and narrow. Anterior cingulum with a single elliptical accessory cusp sweeping
 209 backwards along lingual edge. Accessory cusp small in all specimens. T1 very small and circular,
 210 connected to T2 at early stages of wear. T2 posteriorly inclined, large and elliptical. It is the highest
 211 cusp at early stages of wear but becomes uniform with the other M¹ cusps after wear. T1-2 complex
 212 buccolingually aligned. T3 positioned to posterior of T1-2 complex, at mid-point of tooth. T3 elliptical,
 213 directed proximally and connected to T2 by an enamel rim in the holotype. At early stages of wear it is
 214 entirely distinct but merges completely with T1-2 complex after extreme wear. T4 small, circular and
 215 merged with T5 at most stages of wear. It sweeps posteriorly from T5 so anterior edge of T4 is in line
 216 with the posterior edge of T5. T5 large, subtriangular in occlusal outline and leans posteriorly. Enamel
 217 rim connects T5 to both T4 and T6. T6 positioned posterior to T5, elongated anteroposteriorly and
 218 directed proximally, similar to T3. T6 merges with T4-5 complex after extreme wear. T6 also distinct
 219 from T9 at early stages of wear but merges quickly. Posterior edge of cusps T4-T6 arcs anteriorly to

220 enclose T8. T7 barely discernible in holotype but is present in other specimens at early stages of wear
221 before merging completely with T8. In these specimens it is small and directed posteriorly. T8 very
222 large and circular, directed posteriorly. T9 incorporated at all stages of wear with T8. Enamel rim
223 around cusps uniform throughout tooth but becomes slightly wider with extreme wear.

224 **M²**. Tooth is mostly circular in holotype but shape variable, with other specimens more elongate.
225 Elongation is affected by size of T3 and T8, with the anterior of M² developing a bulge with increase in
226 T3, similarly, posterior developing a bulge with increase in T8. T1 and T2 absent. T3 distinct and
227 elliptical, directed proximally. T3 and T5 are the highest cusps at early stages of wear but T3 wears
228 faster than T5 to become uniform with the other cusps. T4 small, circular and leans posteriorly. It is
229 incorporated into T5, but also sweeps posteriorly from T5, with anterior edge of T4 in line with
230 posterior edge of T5. T5 subtriangular and directed posteriorly. T6 positioned posterior to T5,
231 elongated anteroposteriorly and oriented proximally. At later stages of wear T6 merges with T4-5
232 complex. Posterior edge of T4-5 complex and posterior edge connecting T6 with T9 forms anterior arc
233 to enclose T8, similar to M¹. T7 absent. T8 large, circular in occlusal outline and directed posteriorly.
234 At extreme stages of wear T8 merges with elongated T6. T9 merges with T8 at all stages of wear,
235 similar to M¹. Enamel rim surrounding the cusps of uniform width, becoming thicker with wear.

236 **M³**. Tooth circular with a bulge on anterolingual edge for T3, cusp height uniform. T1 and T2
237 absent. T3 small, circular and distinct, directed proximally. Furrow between T3 and T4-6 complex
238 ensures T3 distinct in all but very late stages of wear. T4 completely incorporated into T5. It sweeps
239 posteriorly markedly from T5, directed posterobuccally. T5 subtriangular in occlusal outline, large and
240 directed posteriorly. T6 small and subtriangular. It merges with T5, slightly sweeping posteriorly from
241 T5 with enamel rim connecting to T8-9 complex. Posterior edge of T4-5 complex curves
242 anterobuccally, with posterior edge of T6 curving anterolingually. T7 absent. T8 large, elliptical and
243 orientated vertically. Anterior edge of T8 curves posteriorly. Anterior edge of T8 combined with
244 posterior edge of T4-6 complex creates elliptical furrow. T9 entirely incorporated into T8. Enamel rim
245 uniform in width and connecting all cusps except T3 in holotype which only connects at very late
246 stages of wear.

247

248 **M¹**. With three roots, all of which directed somewhat anteriorly. Anterior root largest of the three,
249 circular in shape and positioned under accessory cusp and T1-T3. Lingual root anteroposteriorly

250 stretched, narrow and positioned under T6 and T9. Posterior root smallest of the three, circular and
251 positioned under T8.

252 **M²**. With three roots, all directed vertically. The anterobuccal and posterobuccal roots of equal size
253 and circular. Anterobuccal root extends from underneath T4 and T5, while posterobuccal root
254 positioned beneath T8. Lingual root large and elongated, extending from T3 to T6.

255 **M³**. With three roots all directed vertically. Anterobuccal root small and circular, extending from
256 beneath T5. Anterolingual root slightly larger and more elongated than anterobuccal root and
257 positioned under T3 and T6. Posterior root largest of the three, supporting approximately half tooth
258 length and extending from T8.

259 Attachment node for the origin of the superficial masseter is of moderate size and well defined in some
260 specimens, positioned anterior to M¹. Posterior extent of anterior palatal foramen lies at anterior root of
261 M¹. Zygomatic plate of QMF57258 wide with posterior edge convex (Fig. 7).

262

263

264 *Leggadina macrodonta* sp. nov.

265

266 **Holotype**

267 QM F57276, partial left maxillary including zygomatic plate with M¹ (Fig. 8).

268

269 **Type locality and age**

270 Site 5C, Floraville Station, northwestern Queensland; Plio-Pleistocene (Rich *et al.* 1991).

271

272 **Paratypes**

273 QM F57273, partial left maxillary with M² (Fig. 9); QM F57268, left M¹ (Fig. 10); QM F57275, partial
274 left maxillary with M¹ and alveoli of M² (Fig. 11).

275

276 **Etymology**

277 Named for the distinctively large size of the first upper molar.

278

279 **Diagnosis**

280 *Leggadina macrodonta* differs from other species of the genus in the following combination of
281 characters: M¹ enlarged, approximately 18% larger than in *Leggadina forresti* and *L. lakedownensis*;
282 M² similarly enlarged, approximately 16% larger than in those species; anterior cingulum enlarged
283 with two accessory cusps that wear to a greatly elongated accessory cusp; well-developed T1 and
284 T4 posterolingually aligned; T1 sup present on some specimens; central series of cusps enlarged.

285

286 **Referred specimens**

287 QM F57266, right M¹; QM F57267, left M¹; QM F57269, left M¹; QM F57270, right M¹; QM F57271,
288 left M¹; QM F57272, right M¹; QM F57274, left M¹; QM F57277, left M¹; QM F57278, right M¹; QM
289 F57279, right M¹; QM F57280, right M¹; QM F57281, right M¹; QM F57282, left M¹ (Table 2).

290

291 **Description**

292 Complete tooth row not known. M¹ and M² are isolated specimens, no specimen of M³ found to date.
293 M¹ large, M² approximately half length of M¹. Furrow between lingual series and central series of
294 cusps in M¹ and M². Buccal series of cusps reduced in M¹, all cusps inclined posteriorly.

295

296 **M¹:** Tooth elliptical with thin and uniform enamel rim around all cusps. Two small accessory
297 cusplets present on anterior cingulum in holotype. With wear they become one very large accessory
298 cusp, elongated posterolingually, sweeping back along lingual edge. T1 large and elongated, becoming
299 more elongated with wear. Anterior edge of T1 sits posterior to T2, at half-way point of tooth. T1
300 orientated posteriorly with axis of cusp stretching posterolingually, parallel to single accessory cusp in
301 specimens other than holotype. It merges with T2 at late stages of wear. T1 sup present on some
302 specimens, situated on posterolingual edge of T1. It is small and circular, merging into T1 with wear.
303 T2 of moderate size and subtriangular in occlusal outline. T3 very small and circular, sweeping slightly
304 posteriorly from T2 in some specimens. T3 often connected to T2 by enamel rim, later merging with
305 wear. T4 large and tear-shaped, increasing in size posteriorly with wear but never merging with T7 or
306 T8. It only barely merges with T5, even at late stages of wear. Large size of T4 together with similarly
307 sized T1 creates a bulge on lingual edge of tooth, enlarging width of otherwise slender tooth. Anterior
308 edge of T4 sits posterior to the posterior edge of T5. T4 higher at posterior edge than anterior edge.
309 Cusp posteriorly inclined, with axis running almost parallel to main axis of tooth. T5 large and
310 subtriangular, orientated posteriorly. T6 circular, elongating anteroposteriorly with wear and merged

311 with T5 at most stages of wear. Posterior edge of T6 sweeps posteriorly slightly from T5 in most
312 specimens. Posterior edge of T4-6 complex mostly arcuate anteriorly, enclosing T7-9 complex,
313 especially on lingual side. T7 indistinguishable from T8 in the holotype but very small and completely
314 incorporated into T8 in other specimens. T8 large and circular, orientated posteriorly. It is the highest
315 cusp with all others roughly uniform in height. T9 small and elliptical. Lower half of T9 connects to T8
316 at early stages of wear, becoming fully incorporated with further wear.

317 **M²:** Triangular in shape with broadest point along anterior edge. T1 circular and distinct, cusp
318 directed posteriorly with occlusal surface inclined proximally. Deep furrows on buccal and posterior
319 side of T1 separate it from other cusps and retains identity through wear. T2 and T3 absent. T4 large,
320 elongated and tear-shaped, stretching posterolingually. Anterior edge of T4 sits posterior to posterior
321 edge of T5. T4 posteriorly inclined, with occlusal surface facing proximally, similar to T1. T5 only
322 slightly larger than T4 and subtriangular, connecting to T4 by its enamel rim and directed posteriorly.
323 T6 absent. Posterior edge of T4-5 complex arcuate anteriorly, enclosing T8. T7 almost
324 indistinguishable from T8 but indicated by a small bulge on the lingual edge of T8. T8 large and
325 circular, directed posteriorly. Posterior edge arcuate posteriorly and delineates the most posterior edge
326 of the tooth. No obvious indication of presence of T9. Remnant of furrow that marked its position
327 present, indicating it has been wholly incorporated into T8. Enamel rim of cusps is variable, with T5
328 and T8 thicker than other cusps. All cusps of equal height and incline posteriorly at varying degrees,
329 with T5 and T8 leaning posteriorly more than T1 and T4.

330 **M³:** No specimen known.

331

332 **M¹:** With three roots. Anterior root the largest of the three. It is circular and directed anteriorly
333 from the accessory cusp and T2. Posterolingual root narrow and plunges vertically from T1 and T4.
334 Posterior root of equal size with posterolingual root but more circular and stretches vertically from T8
335 and T9.

336 **M²:** Roots not visible on only available specimen of M². Description has been gathered from
337 alveoli in a specimen also preserving M¹ (QM F57275). M² has three roots. Lingual root very large and
338 elongated, directed vertically. Anterobuccal root smaller than lingual root and circular, stretching to
339 anterior. Posterobuccal root smallest of the three, elongated and extends vertically.

340 **M³:** No specimen known.

341

342 Information on dental arcade is limited. Large posterior palatal foramen extends distally from posterior
343 of M¹. Zygomatic plate wide with posterior edge appearing almost straight but is slightly convex.

344

345

346 Discussion

347 *Taphonomy*

348 Even though Riversleigh's Rackham's Roost Site and Floraville's Site 5C represent vast differences in
349 both mode of death and environment of preservation, similar skeletal elements have been preserved.
350 Rackham's Roost Site is interpreted to have been a Ghost Bat (*Macroderma gigas*) roost during the
351 Pliocene (Hand 1996) and specimens of *Leggadina* found there are thought to be the result of bat
352 predation (Godthelp 1997). Floraville's Site 5C specimens are more likely to have come from
353 marsupial predators, fossils of which have also been found at the site (Rich *et al.* 1991). Both sites
354 preserve individual teeth, with the Rackham's Roost site preserving molar rows and some of the
355 surrounding dental arcade and zygomatic plate. There have been no complete skulls found at either
356 site. The fractured cranial and post cranial elements found cannot be attributed to individual murine
357 taxa due to overlaps in size and a lack of features known to separate them (H. Godthelp, pers. comm.
358 2013).

359

360 Within the broad similarity of the two sites, the individual teeth found are different. The Rackham's
361 Roost assemblage includes a large number of upper molars (upper = 28, lower = 0), including whole
362 molar rows, whereas Site 5C specimens are dominated by lower molars but lack any molar rows (upper
363 = 17, lower = 20). The increased preservation of upper molars over lower molars is expected since the
364 lower molars, attached to the mandible, have a greater chance of early disarticulation before
365 preservation, whereas the upper molars are more likely to be retained in situ with the skull and post
366 cranial bones for a longer period of time (Behrensmeyer 1984). Nevertheless, it is important to note
367 that the mandible tends to be stronger than the cranium, suggesting the large number of lower molars at
368 Site 5C is the result of the lowers surviving the preservation process more readily than the uppers
369 (Behrensmeyer 1984). It is possible that sampling could have played a part in these results. The
370 question then is whether further sampling at numerous places on Site 5C would increase the number of
371 upper molars found. The only way to test this is through continued sampling. The Rackham's Roost
372 specimens on the other hand would have suffered little disturbance during the process of fossilisation

373 as specimens would have been protected inside the cave until it eroded. This is the likely reason more
374 complete molar rows have been found at this site, however this does not explain why so few lower
375 molars have been found. Again this could be due to sampling (Lundelius 2006).

376

377 The occlusal surface of molars from specimens found at Rackham's Roost Site provides additional
378 information on the age of individual animals through the degree of wear present on molars. The
379 specimens collected from Rackham's Roost are dominated by largely unworn occlusal features,
380 indicating a large number of the specimens were juveniles. *Macroderma gigas* moves to different
381 feeding roosts to take advantage of seasonal resources, and it is likely they followed the breeding
382 cycles of its prey, explaining the dominance of juveniles in the sample (Tidemann *et al.* 1985).

383

384 *Environmental Impact*

385 The early and middle Miocene in Australia was characterised by high levels of rainfall and the
386 dominance of rainforest communities (Martin 2006). As Australia moved from 'greenhouse' to
387 'icehouse' conditions in the later Miocene (10-5mya) the environment became increasingly arid and
388 the biota needed to adapt (Dawson & Dawson 2006). Rackham's Roost at this time represents the
389 result of a community changing from rainforest to mosaics of grassland and open woodland (Archer,
390 Hand & Godthelp 1991). The changing distribution and diversity of mammals in the Riversleigh World
391 Heritage Area fossil deposits is evidence of these changes (Archer *et al.* 1989; Travouillon *et al.* 2009).
392 It is likely that as this change occurred it produced arid-type responses in much of its fauna (Archer *et*
393 *al.* 1998), as seen in the Alcoota assemblage in the Northern Territory which shows a marked change in
394 biota present in the late Miocene and early Pliocene (Black *et al.* 2012). The Pleistocene period was
395 characterised by great climatic fluctuations caused by over 20 cycles of glacial and interglacial periods
396 (Martin 2006). This would have resulted in great unpredictability of resources, forcing animals of all
397 types to adapt their diet and behaviour where possible in order to survive these widespread changes
398 (Archer *et al.* 1998).

399

400 Continent-wide climatic shifts during the Pliocene and Pleistocene were very fast in terms of
401 evolutionary response time, requiring taxa to either adapt quickly, be resilient enough to survive, or to
402 be lost entirely (Archer *et al.* 1998). One of the factors that characterises the success of rodents in
403 Australia is their rapid speciation (Bush *et al.* 1977). Modern *Leggadina* species inhabit arid-

404 environments in northeastern Queensland (*L. lakedownensis*) and a variety of areas through inland
405 Australia (*L. forresti*) (Watts & Aslin 1981). However, climatic fluctuations mean that these arid-
406 adapted rodents evolved from an ancestor which was not arid-adapted. The environment of Southeast
407 Asia during the Miocene, thought to be the originating point of Australian murids, was characterised by
408 tropical rainforest which were slowly beginning to contract (Heaney 1991).

409

410 Species of *Leggadina* have reasonably complex molars in comparison to closely related taxa, for
411 example, both *Leggadina gregoriensis* and *L. macrodonta* have an additional occlusal structure
412 (furrows) that allows for increased precision during mastication, indicating the evolution and
413 specialisation of their teeth for a predominantly granivorous diet (Herring 1993; Evans *et al.* 2007).
414 Similarly, the width of the zygomatic plate is a useful indicator of the kinds of food eaten by rodents,
415 because width of the zygomatic plate increases with an increase in the size of the anterior deep
416 masseter muscle used for pulverising food (Watts & Aslin 1981; Satoh 1997). The zygomatic plate in
417 both fossil species is quite wide suggesting further specialisation for a predominately granivorous diet.
418 Whether these fossil *Leggadina* species evolved these adaptations within Australia or before they
419 migrated cannot be determined at the moment due to the lack of knowledge on both the timing and
420 method of their dispersal to and within Australia, as well as appropriate morphological evidence for
421 other Australian fossil species.

422

423 An especially distinguishing feature of *Leggadina macrodonta* is the size of its teeth, particularly M¹
424 which is up to 18% larger than the M¹ of *L. gregoriensis* or the two modern forms. The increase in size
425 of the teeth and occlusal structures could be due to a number of different factors. Larger teeth would be
426 a useful adaptation for taking advantage of a wider variety of resources necessary for survival in the
427 changeable Pleistocene climate; however it could also represent specialisation for a more selective diet
428 also resulting from a changing environment. Broader ecological evidence would need to be presented
429 on changes in tooth structure in other species during the Pleistocene and associated reasons to make a
430 more informed determination on the effect of a changing climate on tooth changes in *L. macrodonta*. It
431 is also possible the increase in size of the molars was due to an increase in overall body mass, with this
432 particular species growing larger in order to compete against larger animals for resources, as well as
433 becoming able to process low nutrient foods more easily and reduce water loss (Archer *et al.* 1998;
434 Dawson & Dawson 2006). Unfortunately it is not possible to calculate body mass of this species

435 currently due to the absence of adequate lower molar data and a lack of long bones in the fossil
436 assemblage relatable to this species (Hopkins 2008).

437

438 There are no current estimates on the timing of evolutionary divergence of *Leggadina* from related
439 taxa. The most recent and comprehensive study on divergence times of murids (Nilsson *et al.* 2010)
440 suggests divergence of the Conilurini from a *Mus* ancestor between 11 and 7.3 million years ago, with
441 the Conilurini dispersing from New Guinea to Australia between 7.19 and 6.48 million years ago. This
442 is congruent with available evidence from the fossil record and provides sufficient time for the
443 colonisation of Australia and the establishment of native Australian species before their first
444 appearance in the fossil record at around 5 million years, as seen in the appearance of *Leggadina*
445 *gregoriensis* at this time (Nilsson *et al.* 2010). Unfortunately, with the paucity of investigated fossil
446 evidence from Australia, even with the description of two new species here, it is not possible to
447 develop divergence dates for individual Australian genera as more fossils are necessary for use as
448 calibration points for molecular clocks.

449

450 *Future Work*

451 Molar morphology has been an important tool for understanding the evolution of the Murinae and other
452 rodent groups for over 100 years. At this point in time it is still essential for the description of new
453 species of Australian murids. However, to date there has been no comprehensive phylogenetic analysis
454 based on morphology including both fossil and modern species. The leading analysis on morphological
455 relationships relied almost solely on molar morphology and was conducted over 40 years ago (Misonne
456 1969). On the other hand, advances in molecular assessment of murid relationships have proliferated
457 over the past 30 years (Baverstock *et al.* 1981; Pascale, Valle & Furano 1990; Catzefflis, Aguilar &
458 Jaeger 1992; Watts *et al.* 1992; Jansa and Weksler 2004; Steppan *et al.* 2005; Rowe *et al.* 2008;
459 Nilsson *et al.* 2010; Schenk, Rowe & Steppan 2013). An updated morphological phylogeny combined
460 with molecular phylogenies would give a much more cohesive picture of Australian murid
461 evolutionary history than using either alone (Wiens 2004; Aplin 2006).

462

463

464 **Conclusion**

465 Murid rodents are the most speciose mammalian family in Australia, but their evolutionary
466 relationships and origins have been shrouded in mystery due in large part to the paucity of fossil
467 evidence available. This project has gone some way to rectifying that by describing two new species of
468 the genus *Leggadina*: *Leggadina gregoriensis* from the Pliocene Rackham's Roost Site in the
469 Riversleigh World Heritage Area and *Leggadina macrodonta* from the Plio-Pleistocene Site 5C at
470 Floraville Station, both in northwestern Queensland. *Leggadina gregoriensis* extends the temporal
471 range of the genus *Leggadina* to 5 million years. Both fossil species display an increased complexity in
472 the molars and larger attachment sites on the zygomatic plate, likely due to the development of a
473 predominately granivorous diet. *L. macrodonta* also displays an increase in size of M¹ and M² which
474 may be the result of a number of factors including adaptation to the unpredictability of, and increased
475 competition for, resources during the Pleistocene or an increase in body size. Further research is
476 essential to further develop understanding on the relationships and evolution of the genus *Leggadina* as
477 well as the broader Murinae group.

478

479

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485

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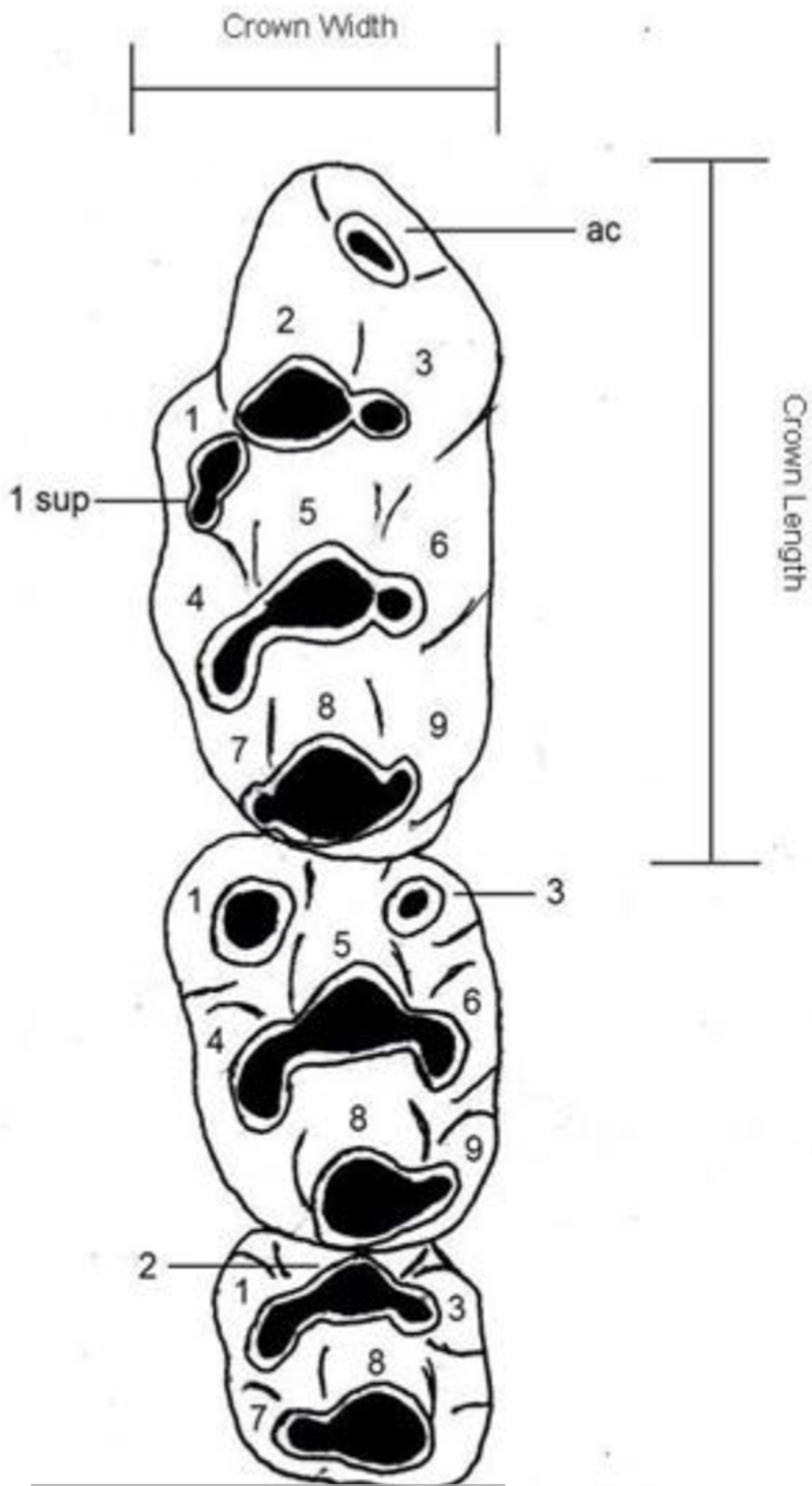
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1

Dental nomenclature used for descriptions.

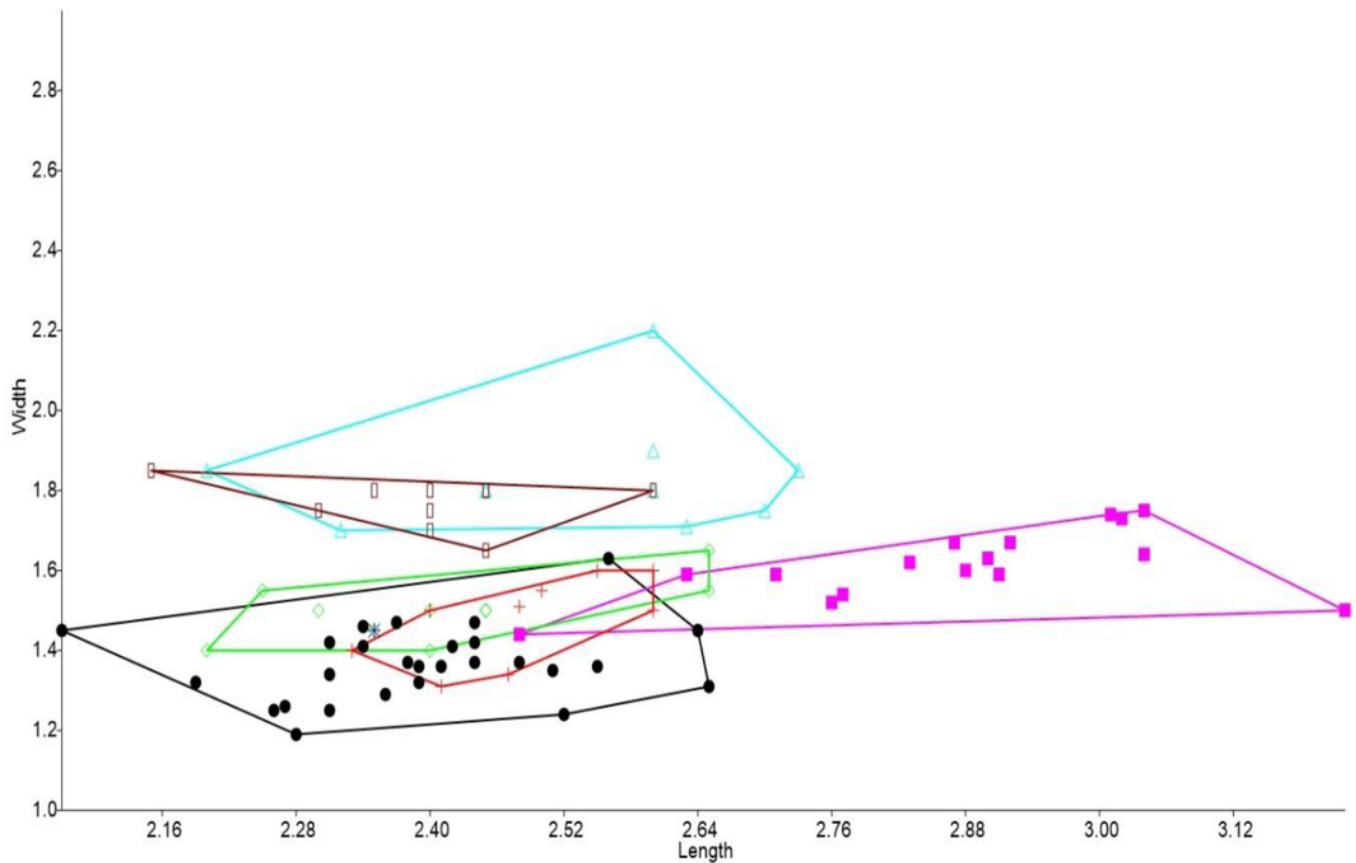
Dental nomenclature used in the description of fossil *Leggadina*. Adapted from Musser and Newcomb (1983) but modified to better represent features of fossil *Leggadina* specimens. Left upper molar row, cusps (1-9) referred to in text with the prefix 'T', ac = accessory cusp, sup = supplementary. Measurements were taken on maximum crown length and width.



2

Bivariate plot comparing M^1 between murine species.

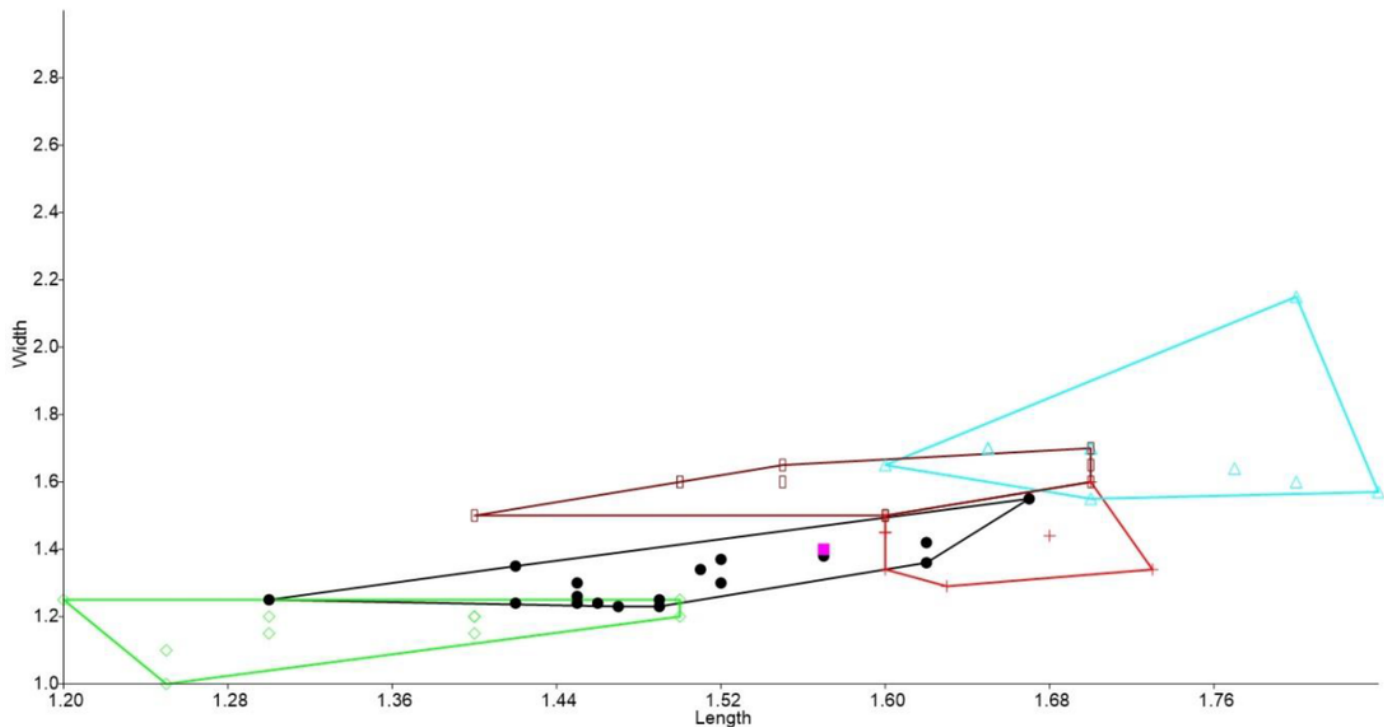
Bivariate plot of maximum crown length and width of M^1 (mm). *Leggadina forresti* = green diamond; *Leggadina lakedownensis* = blue star; *Leggadina gregoriensis* = black circle; *Leggadina macrodonta* = pink square; *Zyzomys argurus* = red cross; *Pseudomys australis* = blue triangle; *Notomys fuscus* = brown rectangle.



3

Bivariate plot comparing M^2 between murine species.

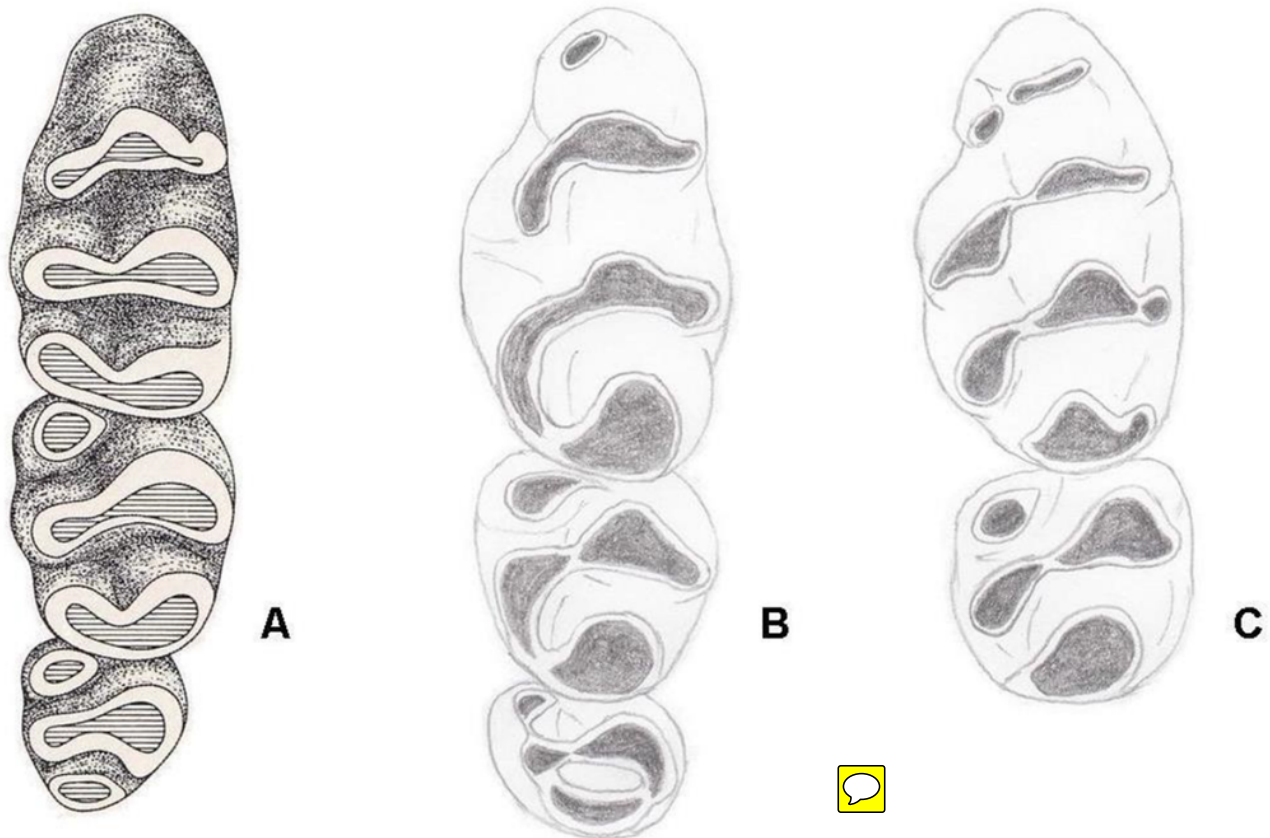
Bivariate plot of maximum crown length and width of M^2 (mm). *Leggadina forresti* = green diamond; *Leggadina gregoriensis* = black circle; *Leggadina macrodonta* = pink square; *Zyzomys argurus* = red cross; *Pseudomys australis* = blue triangle; *Notomys fuscus* = brown rectangle (*L. lakedownensis* not included).



4

Morphological differences between fossil *Leggadina* species and *Zyzomys*.

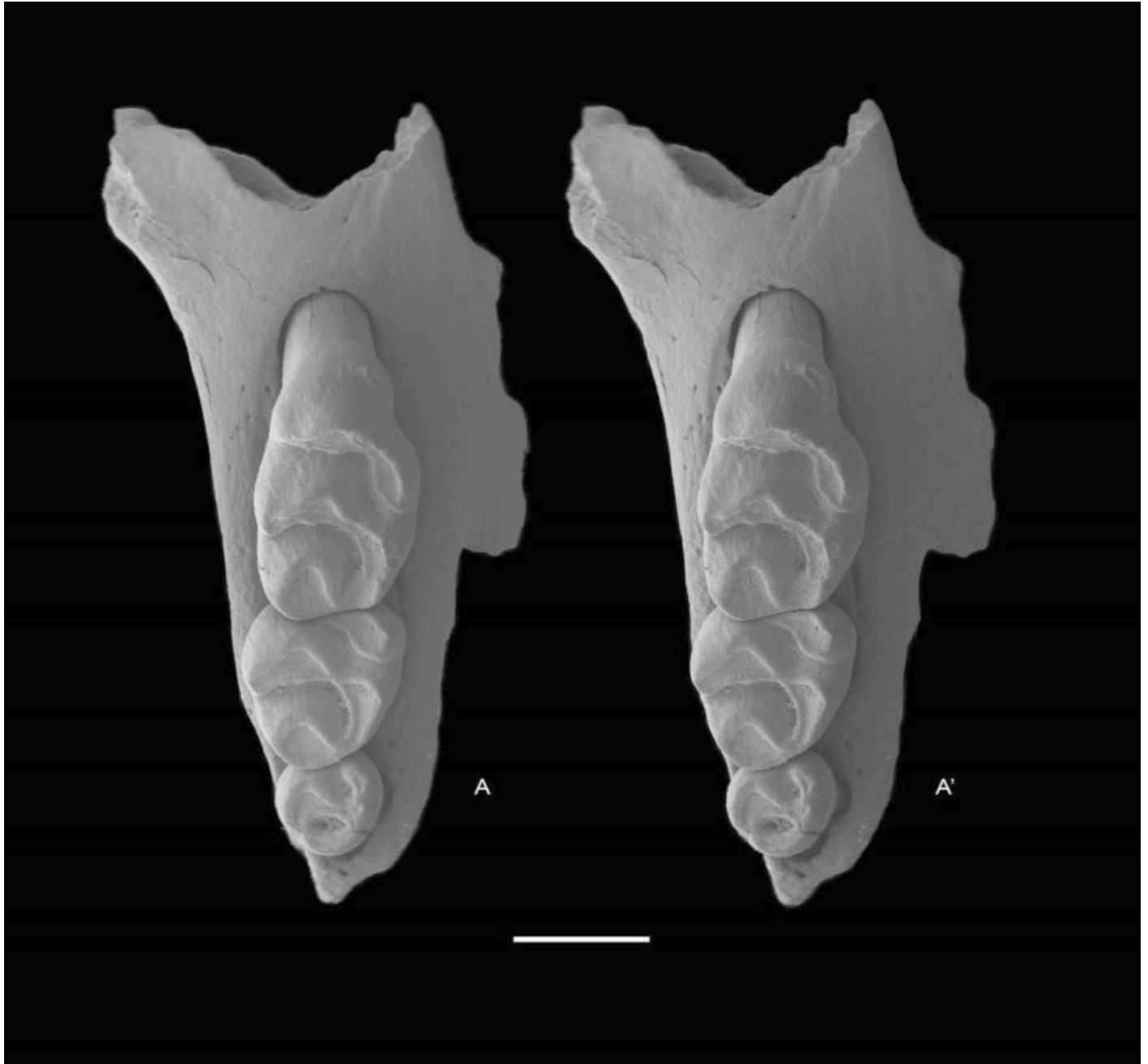
A = left upper molar row of *Zyzomys argurus* (Misonne 1969); B = right upper molar row of holotype (QM F 57259) of *Leggadina gregoriensis*, image has been reversed to represent left upper molar row for comparative purposes; C = left M¹ and M² of *Leggadina macrodonta*, composite of holotype (QM F57276) and paratype (QM F57273). Not to scale.



5

Leggadina gregoriensis sp. nov. Holotype. QM F57259.

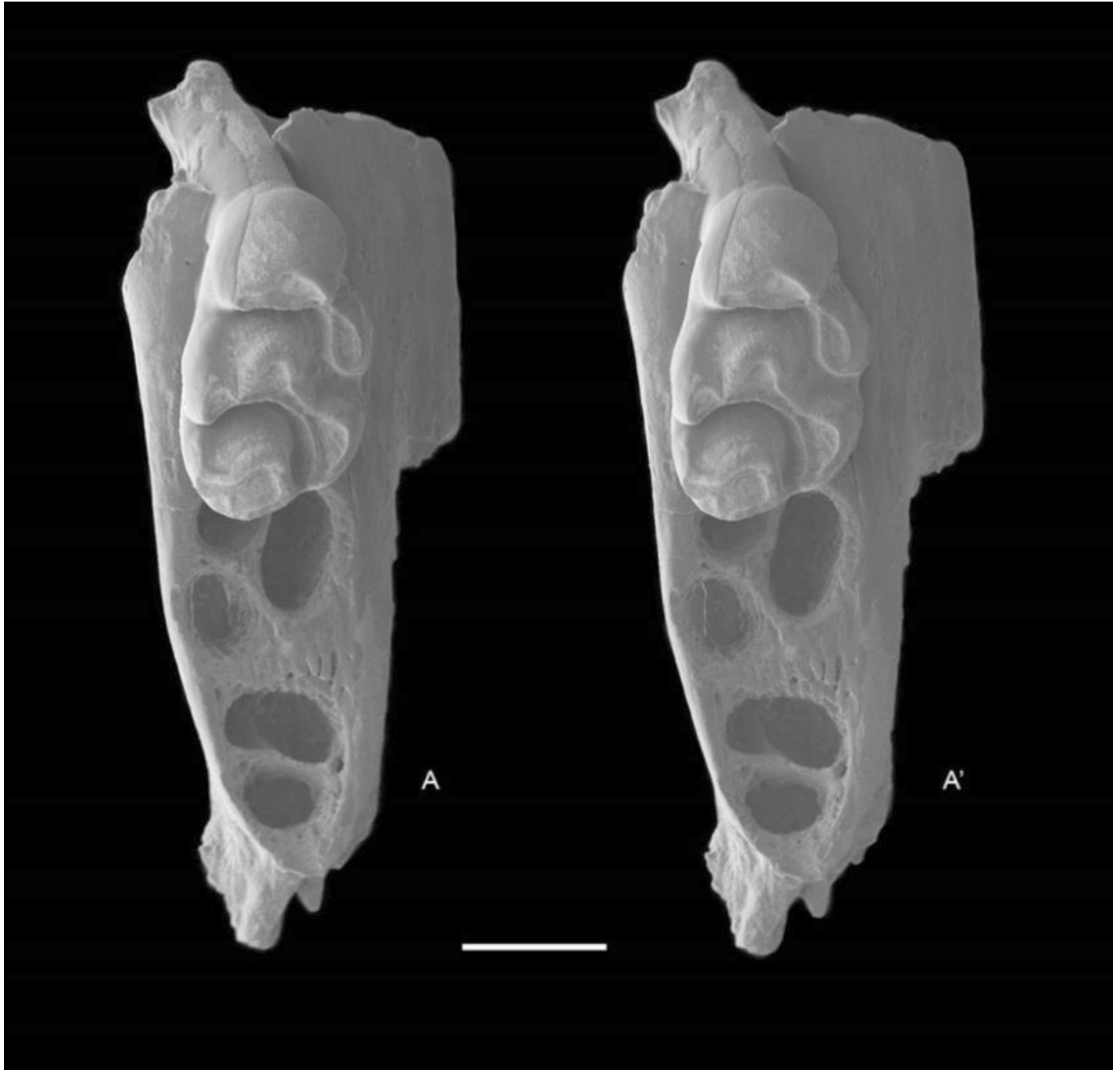
Partial right maxillary with M¹⁻³. Occlusal view. AA' = stereopair. Scale = 1 mm.



6

Leggadina gregoriensis sp. nov. Paratype. QM F57244.

Partial right maxillary with M¹. Occlusal view. A-A' = stereopair. Scale = 1 mm.



7

Leggadina gregoriensis sp. nov. Paratype. QM F57258.

Partial left maxillary including zygomatic plate with M¹⁻². Occlusal view. A-A' = stereopair.

Scale = 1 mm.

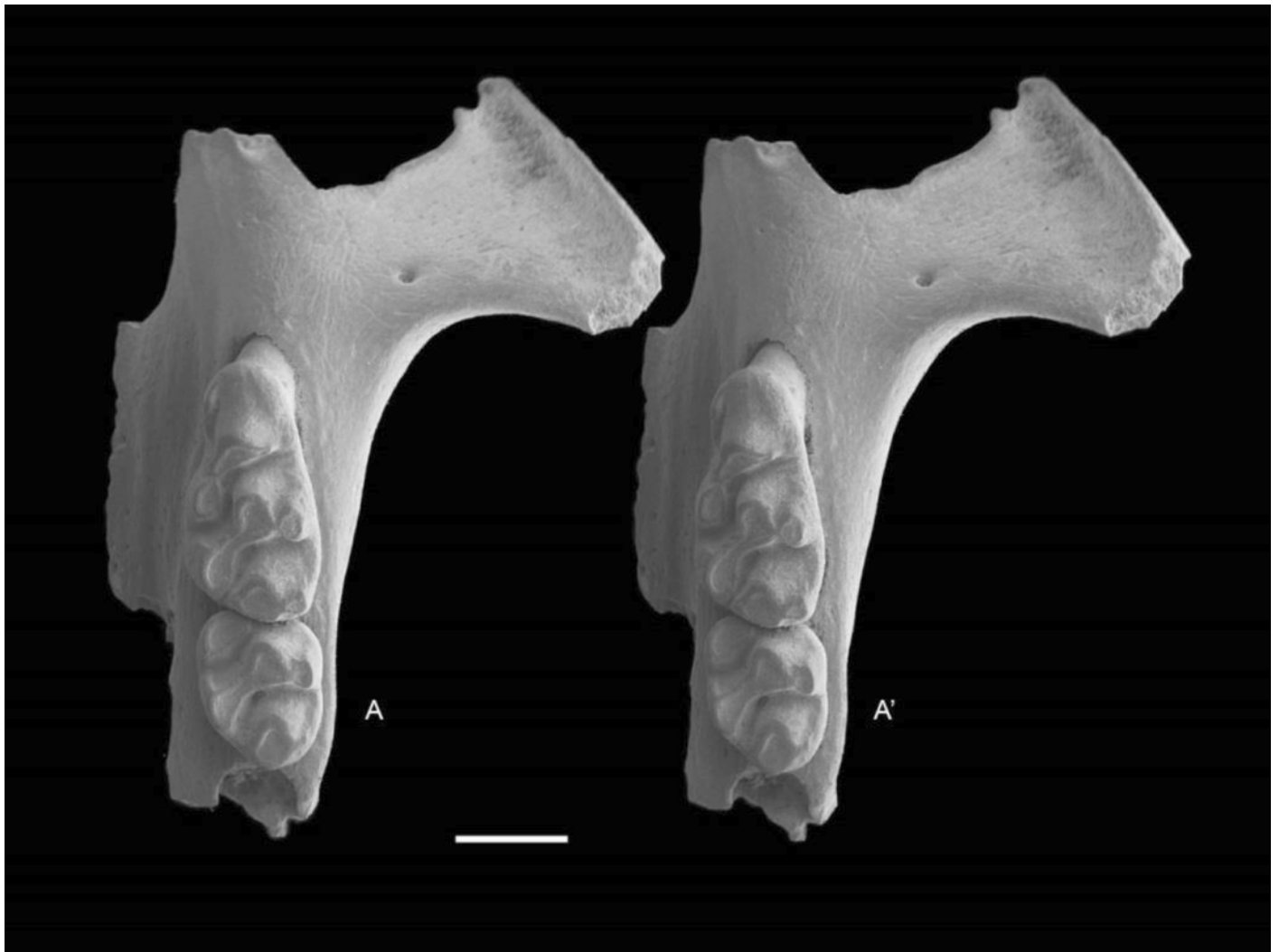


Table 1 (on next page)

Measurements (mm) of *Leggadina gregoriensis* sp. nov.

L = maximum length, W = maximum width.

2 Table 1: Measurements (mm) of *Leggadina gregoriensis* sp. nov. L = maximum length, W = maximum width.

3

Specimen no.	M ¹		M ²		M ³		M ¹⁻³		M ¹⁻²	
	L	W	L	W	L	W	L	W	L	W
QM F57240	2.44	1.42	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
QM F57241	2.65	1.31	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
QM F57242	2.07	1.45	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
QM F57243	2.31	1.42	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
QM F57244	2.37	1.47	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
QM F57245	2.34	1.46	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
QM F57246	2.55	1.36	1.52	1.30	1.07	1.02	4.84	1.47	3.90	1.47
QM F57247	-	-	1.62	1.42	-	-	-	-	-	-
QM F57248	2.44	1.37	1.62	1.36	-	-	-	-	3.82	1.39
QM F57249	2.48	1.37	1.51	1.34	-	-	-	-	3.90	1.42
QM F57250	2.34	1.41	1.45	1.30	-	-	-	-	3.79	1.45
QM F57251	2.56	1.63	1.67	1.55	-	-	-	-	4.02	1.64
QM F57252	2.28	1.19	1.49	1.23	-	-	-	-	3.70	1.24
QM F57253	2.19	1.32	1.42	1.35	1.05	0.92	4.54	1.46	3.60	1.46
QM F57254	2.38	1.37	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
QM F57255	2.52	1.24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
QM F57256	2.39	1.32	1.47	1.23	-	-	-	-	3.78	1.32
QM F57257	2.31	1.25	1.46	1.24	-	-	-	-	3.59	1.34
QM F57258	2.41	1.36	1.49	1.25	-	-	-	-	3.81	1.36
QM F57259	2.26	1.25	1.30	1.25	0.85	0.85	4.29	1.37	3.51	1.37
QM F57260	2.27	1.26	1.45	1.24	1.00	0.95	4.45	1.39	3.65	1.39
QM F57261	2.44	1.47	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
QM F57262	2.36	1.29	1.42	1.24	0.96	0.90	4.56	1.35	3.10	1.35
QM F57263	2.39	1.36	1.45	1.26	-	-	-	-	3.70	1.39
QM F57264	2.31	1.34	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
QM F57265	2.64	1.45	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
QM F57283	2.51	1.35	1.52	1.37	1.04	1.00	4.68	1.35	3.79	1.35
QM F39958	2.42	1.41	1.57	1.38	0.94	0.90	4.57	1.42	3.84	1.42

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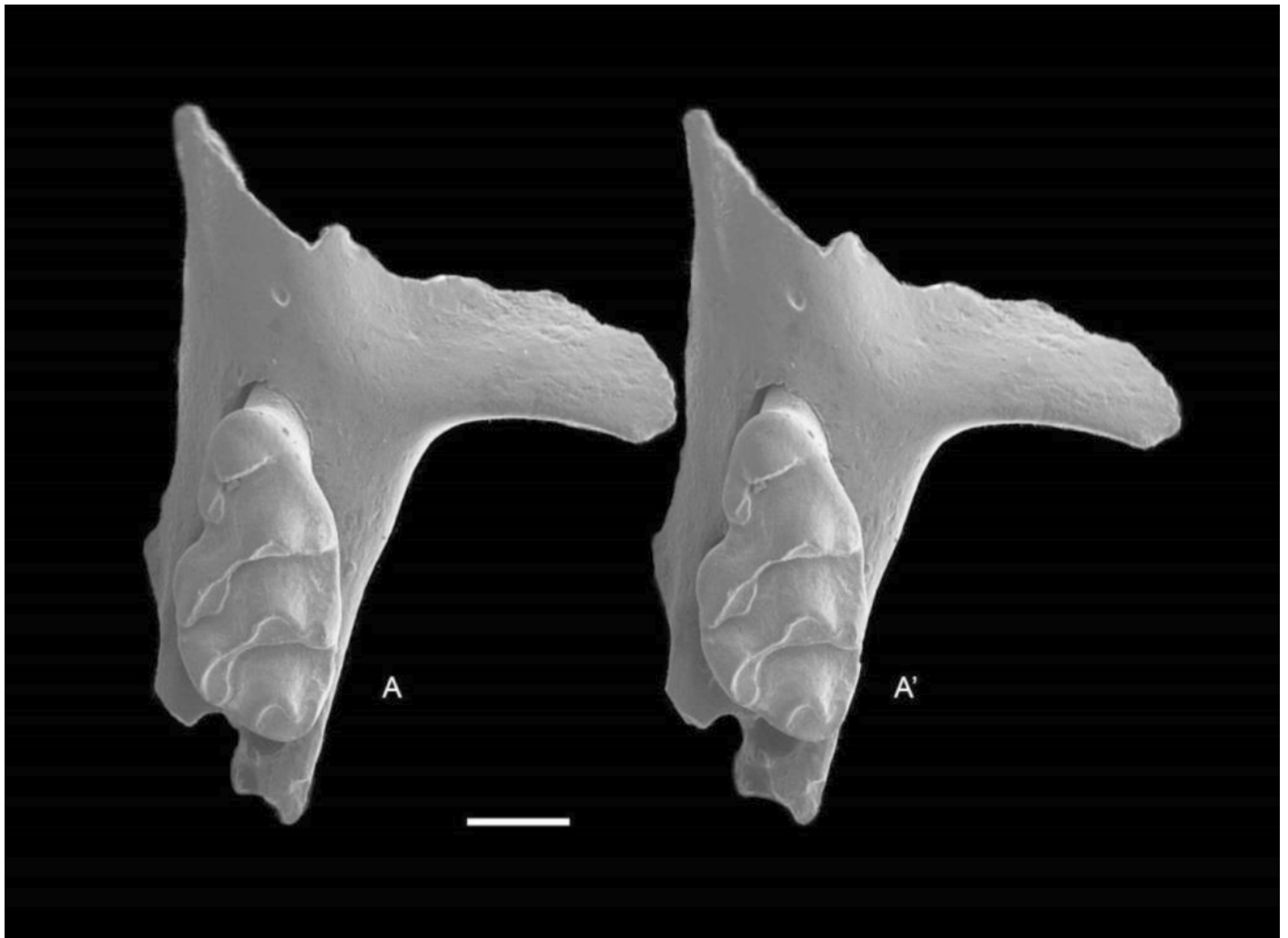
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8

Leggadina macrodonta sp. nov. Holotype. QM F57276.

Partial left maxillary including zygomatic plate with M¹. Occlusal view. A-A' = stereopair.

Scale = 1 mm.



9

Leggadina macrodonta sp. nov. Paratype. QM F57273.

Partial left maxillary with M². Occlusal view. A-A' = stereopair. Scale = 1 mm.



10

Leggadina macrodonta sp. nov. Paratype. QM F57268.

Left M¹. Occlusal view. A-A' = stereopair. Scale = 1 mm.



11

Leggadina macrodonta sp. nov. Paratype. QM F57275.

Partial left maxillary with M¹ and alveoli of M². Occlusal view. A-A' = stereopair. Scale = 1 mm.

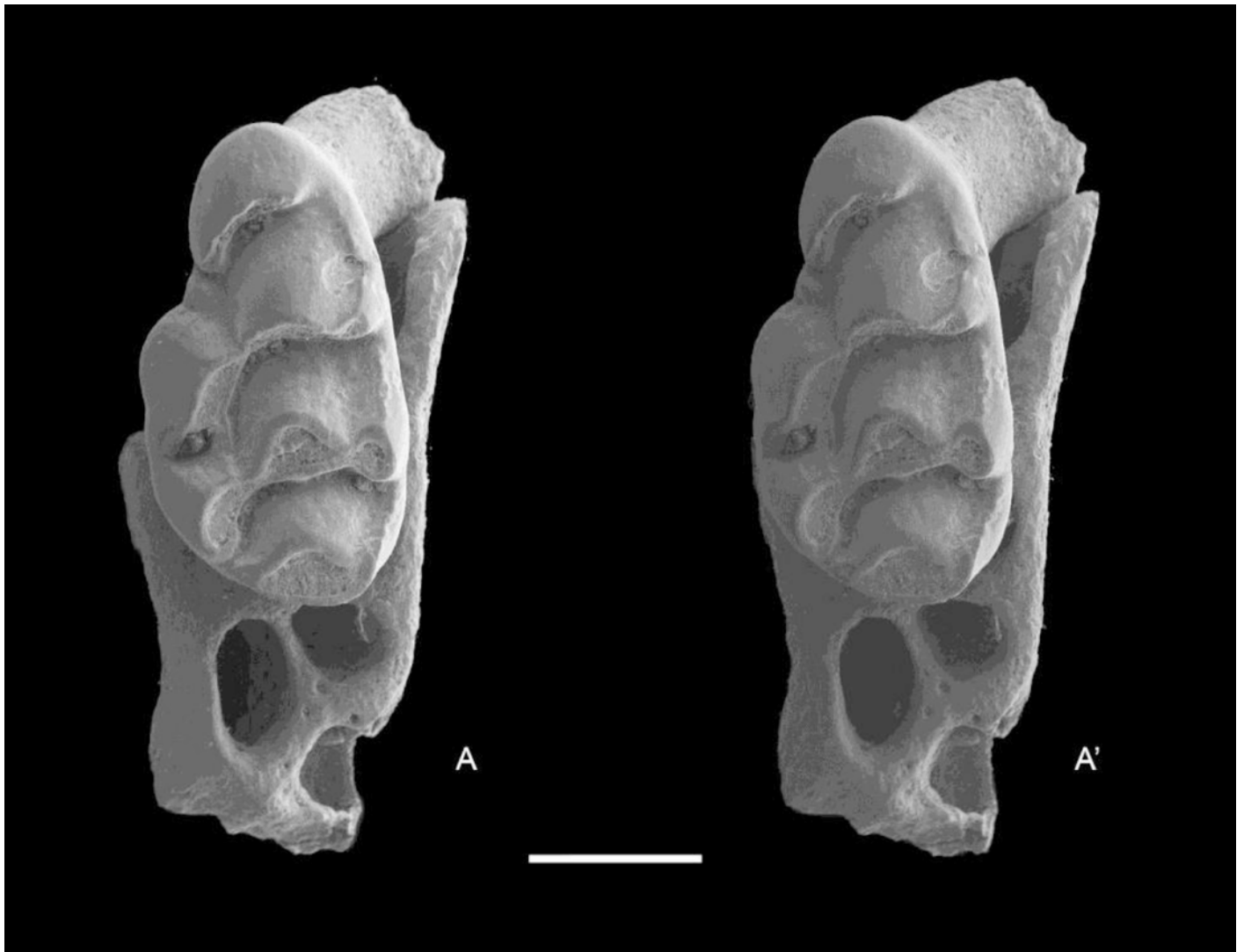


Table 2 (on next page)

Measurements (mm) of *Leggadina macrodonta* sp. nov.

L = maximum length, W = maximum width.

2 Table 2: Measurements (mm) of *Leggadina macrodonta* sp. nov. L = maximum length, W = maximum width.

Specimen no.	M ¹		M ²	
	L	W	L	W
QMF57266	2.48	1.44	-	-
QMF57267	3.04	1.75	-	-
QMF57268	3.04	1.64	-	-
QMF57269	2.77	1.54	-	-
QMF57270	2.91	1.59	-	-
QMF57271	2.92	1.67	-	-
QMF57272	2.71	1.59	-	-
QMF57273	-	-	1.57	1.40
QMF57274	2.83	1.62	-	-
QMF57275	2.88	1.60	-	-
QMF57276	3.22	1.50	-	-
QMF57277	3.02	1.73	-	-
QMF57278	3.01	1.74	-	-
QMF57279	2.90	1.63	-	-
QMF57280	2.87	1.67	-	-
QMF57281	2.63	1.59	-	-
QMF57282	2.76	1.52	-	-