Abstract

The bachelor thesis surveys literary data on taxonomy, distribution, phylogeny and range history of the genus *Sicista*, one of the least known clade of Palearctic rodents. The genus composes a monotypic family Sminthidae, a basal branch of the superfamily Dipodoidea recorded since the late Eocene. Fourteen recent species are currently distinguished. Most of them colonize small vicariant ranges distributed from East Asia to Central Europe with peak of species diversity in Central Asia and Caucasus regions. Also two taxa occupying large ranges (*S. betulina, S. subtilis*) including eastern parts of Central Europe rank among the rarest local species throughout most of their ranges. The European fossil record (more than 150 Quaternary sites) indicate quite a more extensive distribution covering diverse regions of the Western Europe during the Pleistocene and the early Holocene. Yet, the species identity of many fossil records remain doubtful due to quite indistinct morphological differences among particular species. The discrimination criteria and range history in Central Europe are discussed in details with particular attention to the fossil record available from the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

**Key words:** *Sicista*, phylogeny, range history, diversity, taxonomy, Western Palearctics