

# “SHALLOW WATER” TRACE FOSSILS IN PALEOGENE FLYSCH OF THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE MAGURA NAPPE, POLISH OUTER CARPATHIANS

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**Abstract:** Trace fossil taxa commonly referred to as shallow-water ones occur in the Paleogene flysch in the southern part of the Magura Nappe. They are represented by *Rhizocorallium* ichnosp., *Ophiomorpha nodosa*, *Ophiomorpha* ichnosp. indent. morphotypes A and B, *Thalassinoides* ichnosp., and *Pelecypodichnus* ichnosp. Their occurrence in flysch, including thin-bedded facies, together with “deep-water” forms such *Paleodictyon*, *Spirorhaphe*, *Urohelminthoidea*, indicates that bathymetric interpretation of trace fossils should be done with caution.

**Key words:** Trace fossils, bathymetry, Paleogene, flysch, Carpathians.

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## INTRODUCTION

During the last nearly two decades, trace fossil genera *Skolithos*, *Rhizocorallium*, *Ophiomorpha*, and *Thalassinoides*, interpreted as a shallow-water ones by Seilacher (1967), are repeatedly reported from flysch deposits (Crimes *et al.*, 1981, with references). They frequently occur together with typical forms classified as “deep-water” ones, e.g., *Paleodictyon*, *Megagraption* (e.g., Kern & Warne, 1974; Crimes *et al.*, 1981). Some of the supposedly shallow-water trace fossils occur in the Paleogene flysch of the southern part of the Magura Nappe (Fig. 1) (Uchman, 1988, 1990).

The aim of this publication is to present the “shallow-water” trace fossils in the studied area, based on the present author’s observations in field and on the Prof. Książkiewicz’s collection. The Prof. Książkiewicz’s collection is housed in the Museum of Geology of the Jagiellonian University in Cracow.

## GEOLOGICAL SETTING

The presented material has been collected from deposits of two facies

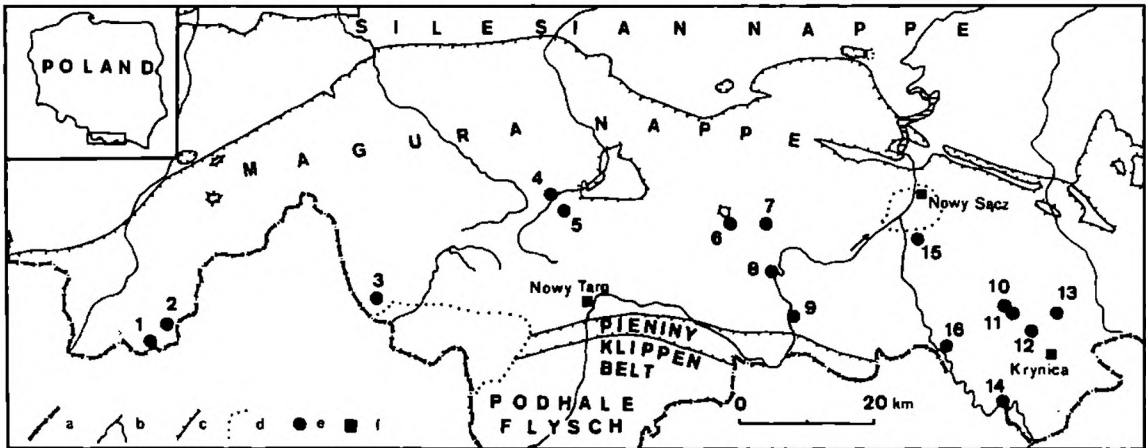


Fig. 1 Location of described sections; *a* – state boundary, *b* – main rivers and lakes, *c* – main overthrusts, *d* – outline of the Neogene post-tectonic cover, *e* – quoted localities (1 – Soblówka, 2 – Glinka, 3 – Lipnica Wielka, 4 – Rabka-Zaryte, 5 – Ponice, 6 – Zasadne, 7 – Zbludza, 8 – Tylmanowa, 9 – Krościenko-Łąkcica, 10 – Łabowiec, 11 – Uhryń, 12 – Roztoka, 13 – Berest, 14 – Milik, 15 – Żeleźnikowa Wielka, 16 – Wierchomla Wielka), *f* – main towns

zones of the Magura Nappe, namely the Krynica (Čerchov) zone and the Nowy Sącz (Bystrica) zone. The strata exposed there, except for the part of the Krynica zone adjacent to the Pieniny Klippen Belt, are Senonian – Oligocene in age (Książkiewicz, 1960, 1977a; Birkenmajer & Oszczytko, 1988, 1989; Oszczytko *et al.*, 1990). They are about 4.000 m thick and consist mainly of siliciclastic, thin to thick-bedded flysch. The Nowy Sącz zone occupies a more northerly position; it is distinguished by the domination of variegated shales in the Upper Paleocene – Lower Eocene as well as by the presence of thick beds of marls (so called Łącko marls) in the Middle – Upper Eocene. The sequence is dated mainly on foraminifers and nannoplankton (Oszczytko *et al.*, 1990, with references).

## DESCRIPTION OF TRACE FOSSILS

Ichnogenus: *Rhizocorallium* Zenker, 1836

Ichnospecies: *Rhizocorallium* ichnosp.

(Pl. III: 3)

Material: 3 specimens in collection and 1 in the field.

Description: horizontal “*spreite*” – like structure, 30 – 55 mm wide, up to 12 cm long, stretched between U-shaped canals which are 10 – 12 mm wide, occurring on the top of turbidite beds, 2.0 – 3.5 cm thick.

Occurrence: thin- and medium-bedded flysch deposits of the Szczawnica Formation (Paleocene – Lower Eocene), Krościenko-Łąkcica.

Remarks: The presence of a distinct, wide marginal canal is the main difference between

*Rhizocorallium* and incompletely preserved *Zoophycos insignis* Squin. According to Seilacher (1967), *Rhizocorallium* is a typical form of the Cruziana ichnofacies, frequent in near-shore deposits (e.g., Fürsich, 1975, with references). However, this form has been also described from deep water, mainly flysch deposits (Hayward, 1976; Crimes, 1977; Crimes *et al.*, 1981; Pickerill *et al.*, 1982). *Rhizocorallium* described as "*Rhizocorallium*" has been noted in deposits of the Magura Nappe by Książkiewicz (1977b), in the Paleocene variegated shales (Bładzonka) and in the Magura Beds (Klimkówka), on the upper surfaces of sandstone beds.

Ichnogenus: *Ophiomorpha* Lundgren, 1891  
Ichnospecies: *Ophiomorpha nodosa* Lundgren, 1891

(Pl. III: 2, V: 2)

**Material:** 80 specimens

**Description:** cylindrical, endichnial fillings of vertical to oblique to horizontal canals (Pl. V: 2), 10 – 20 mm in diameter, with oval knobs, sometimes preserved on their walls, which are diagnostic of *Ophiomorpha*. Some of the horizontal specimens are slightly flattened due to compaction. Some of the specimens show internal meniscate structure.

**Occurrence:** mudstones in thin-thick bedded flysch intercalated within the Piwniczna Sandstone Member (Eocene) – Tylmanowa, Milik (Fig. 1), as well as thick-bedded sandstones of the same member at Wierchomla Wielka (Fig. 1).

**Remarks:** *Ophiomorpha* is produced by arthropods, mainly shrimps, and it occurs mainly in shallow-water, nearshore (beach) deposits (e.g., Frey *et al.*, 1978; Ekdale & Bromley, 1984). However, this ichnotaxon occurs also in deep-sea flysch deposits (Kern & Warne, 1974; Crimes, 1977; Crimes *et al.*, 1981) and even in terrestrial deposits (Gradziński, 1969, p. 222; Merrill, 1984).

*Granularia* Pomel, differing from *Ophiomorpha* in its smaller dimensions, is regarded as a small "flysch version" of *Spongeliomorpha* (Seilacher, 1977) which in turn is related to *Ophiomorpha* (Frey *et al.*, 1978).

In the Piwniczna Sandstone Member at Tylmanowa and Milik, the small and bigger specimens occur together. Their dimensions correspond to those of *Granularia* as well as *Ophiomorpha*. In this case, it is difficult to separate these two ichnotaxa. It is possible that the smaller specimens are produced by juvenile tracemakers of *Ophiomorpha*. In this case, *Granularia* would be a synonym of *Ophiomorpha* (cf. Häntzschel, 1975).

Some of the bigger specimens of *Sabularia rudis* Książkiewicz, including its holotype, strongly resemble the described material. This ichnotaxon has been separated from *Granularia* (Książkiewicz, 1977; Crimes *et al.*, 1981). However, its specimens in the Książkiewicz's collection are not covered with knobs which could escape preservation. The knobs which are pellets reinforcing of canal walls, do not cover the whole surface of the *Ophiomorpha* burrows (cf. Frey *et al.*, 1978).

The distinctive three-dimensional pattern of the *Ophiomorpha* burrows is discernible in most cases in the field.

Ichnospecies: *Ophiomorpha* ichnosp. indet. morphotypes A and B

(Fig. 2C, Pl. I: 1-2, II: 1)

**Material:** 4 specimens in collection and a dozen observations in the field.

**Description:** preserved on the sole of beds as relatively large fullreliefs and semireliefs (the latter are casts of canals exposed by erosion).

**Form A** (Pl. I: 1, II: 1): meandering, convex semireliefs or fullreliefs, 35 – 40 mm wide, occurring on sandstone soles. Their surfaces are covered with irregular knobs.

**Form B** (Pl. I: 2, Fig. 2C): convex semireliefs, above 1 cm thick, preserved on soles of sandstone beds, forming irregular nets. Meshes of the nets are above a few cm in diameter.

**Occurrence:** thin- and medium-bedded flysch of the Beloveža Beds (Middle Eocene). Form A: Łabowiec, Żeleźnikowa Wielka. Form B: Berest, Roztoka, Zasadne, Rabka-Zaryte.

**Remarks:** Form A resembles *Ophiomorpha irregulaire* Frey et Howard (Frey *et al.*, 1978, fig. 1F, 2H, 12A-B, 14A-B). Form B could be a cast of canals exposed by erosion, forming polyhedral, multistorey system of burrows, belonging to various ichnospecies of *Ophiomorpha* (*op. cit.*, fig. 2A-H) or *Thalassinoides*. Forms transitional from *Ophiomorpha* to *Thalassinoides* are known, and in this case a precise determination of ichnogenera is problematical (cf. Frey *et al.*, 1978). Material similar to form A, occurring in the flysch of the Polish Outer Carpathians, has been described by Książkiewicz (1977b) as *Helminthopsis abeli* and *Helminthopsis granulata*. However, they differ from the described above form A, in their smaller dimensions, and in the case of *Helminthopsis abeli*, by the smooth burrow surface. *Helminthopsis granulata* is distinctive by the regularity of the knobs of the burrow surface, arranged in characteristic rows.

### OTHER FORMS RELATED TO *Ophiomorpha*

1. *Arthropycus annulatus*, described from the Polish Outer Carpathians (Książkiewicz, 1977b) has been included lately (Frey & Howard, 1985) to synonymy of *Ophiomorpha annulata* which, according to the authors, is covered with elongate knobs, perpendicular to the main axis of the burrow. However, specimens from the Prof. Książkiewicz's collection, including the holotype, lack the elongate knobs, and instead they show perpendicular segmentation. Hence, the relation of this ichnotaxon to *Ophiomorpha* is problematical.

2. *Tubulichnium incertum* (Książkiewicz, 1977b, Pl. 11: 14-15, Text-fig. 29) shows substantial similarity to *Ophiomorpha*. This ichnotaxon is common in the flysch deposits of the Szczawnica Formation (Paleocene-Lower Eocene). It forms concave semireliefs, 15-20 mm wide, on upper surfaces of thin and medium-bedded turbidite sandstone beds. The reliefs are covered with muddy pellets, up to 1 mm in diameter (Pl. V: 3). Reinforcement of the burrow walls is diagnostic of *Ophiomorpha* (eg., Frey *et al.*, 1978). In the case of *Tubulichnium incertum* the pellets are small, so Książkiewicz (1977b, s. 142-144) has not included this form to *Ophiomorpha*, but distinguished the new monospecific ichnogenus. However, small pellets, less than 1 mm in diameter, are reported from burrow surface of *Ophiomorpha* (Frey *et al.*, 1978). Vertical orientation of the *Tubulichnium incertum* is not observed, so its relation to *Ophiomorpha* is an open question.

### Ichnogenus: *Thalassinoides* Ehrenberg, 1944

#### Ichnospecies: *Thalassinoides* ichnosp.

(Pl. III: 1, IV: 1-2, V: 1, Fig. 2 A-B, D-F)

**Material:** 7 specimens and 2 field observations.

**Description:** horizontal, convex semireliefs and fullreliefs, above 10 mm wide, showing characteristic Y-shaped, frequently swalled bifurcations. An unlabelled specimen from the Prof. Książkiewicz's collection (apparently from the Beloveža Beds, Outer Carpathians, Eocene), is a fragment of a thin sandstone bed covered with hypichnial semireliefs showing well expressed *Thalassinoides* morphology (Fig. 2E), with Y-shaped, swollen bifurcations.

**Occurrence:** thin - and medium bedded flysch of the Beloveža Beds (Lower-Middle Eocene) - Uhryń, Sobłówka, Roztoka, thick bedded flysch deposits of the Magura Formation (Upper Eocene) - Lipnica Wielka, Ponice (Fig. 1).

**Remarks:** *Thalassinoides*, produced mainly by decapod crustaceans (Frey *et al.*, 1984) occurs most frequently in shallow-water deposits (eg. Fürsich, 1975; Ekdale & Bromley, 1984) and is reported, as a typical form of the Cruziana ichnofacies (eg., Frey & Seilacher; Frey & Pemberton, 1985, with references). This ichnotaxon has been described also from flysch (Crimes *et al.*, 1981) and Holocene deep-sea sediments (Wetzel, 1983). Some specimens of the described material resemble *Thalassinoides suevicus* Reith and one of them shows overlapping burrows forming "spreite"-like



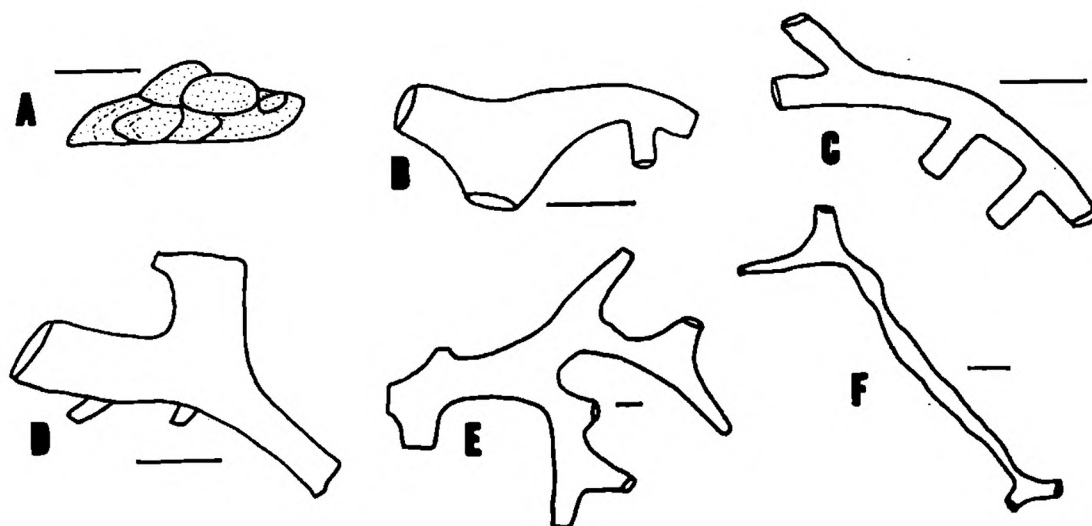


Fig. 2 Drawings of selected specimens. A – cross-section of sample with *?Thalassinoides* ichnosp. showing “spreite”-like structure, Beloveža Beds (Lower – Middle Eocene), Uhryń, B – *Thalassinoides* ichnosp., Magura Formation (Upper Eocene), Lipnica Wielka, C – *?Ophiomorpha* ichnosp., Beloveža Beds (?) (Lower – Middle Eocene), Rabka-Zaryte, D – *Thalassinoides* ichnosp., Magura Formation (Upper Eocene), Ponice, E – *Thalassinoides* ichnosp., Beloveža Beds (Lower – Middle Eocene), uncertain locality, Museum of Geology, Jagiellonian University, F – *Thalassinoides* ichnosp., Beloveža Beds (Lower – Middle Eocene), Rostoka. Scale bar = 2 cm

structure (Fig. 2A) (eg., Frey & Howard, 1985). Most of specimens of *Sabularia ramosa* Książk. described from the Polish Outer Carpathians (Książkiewicz, 1977b) show morphological features of smaller specimens of *Thalassinoides*.

### Ichnogenus: *Pelecypodichnus* Seilacher, 1953

#### Ichnospecies: *Pelecypodichnus* ichnosp.

(Pl. II: 2, III: 4)

**Material:** 3 specimens in collection and 4 in the field.

**Description:** convex semireliefs forming elongate, oval, smooth moulds, about 30 mm long, about 15 mm wide, up to 8 mm high (a specimen from Zbludza), occurring on sandstone soles.

**Occurrence:** thin- and medium-bedded flysch of Beloveža Beds (Middle Eocene) – Zbludza, Glinka, Źeleźnikowa Wielka (Fig. 1).

**Remarks:** *Pelecypodichnus* is a cubichnial trace of pelecypods (Seilacher, 1953) and is regarded as a form typical of deltaic sediments *sensu lato* (vide Crimes *et al.*, 1981). It occurs in shallow-marine and brakish (eg., Pieńkowski, 1985), and even in continental deposits (Bromley & Asgaard, 1979). It has been reported, however, also from deep-sea flysch deposits (Crimes, 1977; Crimes *et al.*, 1981). It has not been hitherto reported from the Polish Outer Carpathians.

### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The ichnotaxa described above, mainly in the Beloveža Beds and Szczawnica Formation, occur together with the diversified “typical deep-water” ichnofauna including *Paleodictyon*, *Urohelminthoidea*, and *Spirorhaphe*, typical

forms of the deep-water *Nereites* ichnofacies (Seilacher, 1967; Frey & Seilacher, 1980). Additionally, *Zoophycos* and *Phycosiphon*, ichnotaxa typical of *Zoophycos* ichnofacies (cf. Frey & Seilacher, 1980), occur commonly in the Szczawnica Formation.

## DISCUSSION

The described above ichnotaxa – *Rhizocorallium*, *Ophiomorpha*, *Thalassinoides*, *Pelecypodichnus* – occur most frequently in shallow-marine sediments, and the first three ones represent the littoral *Skolithos* and *Cruziana* ichnofacies (Frey & Seilacher, 1980, with references). Their occurrence in deep-sea sediments is a big dilemma of ichnology. According to Crimes *et al.* (1981), this ichnotaxa could occur in proximal flysch deposits of the main and distributary channel zone of submarine fans, where hydrodynamic conditions typical of high energy shallow-water environments periodically occur. However, many of the described forms occur in sequences of thin- and medium-bedded flysch, few hundred metres thick, namely in the Beloveža Beds and the Szczawnica Formation. These deposits are more distal and have been laid down in comparatively low-energy conditions (cf. Oszczytko, 1986). So it seems that the occurrence of the “shallow-water” forms is largely independent of the flysch subfacies and these forms are a normal component of various flysch ichnoassociations.

The occurrence of the “shallow-water” ichnotaxa together with the “deep-water” ones, is one of the numerous facts (see Byers, 1982, and references therein) contradicting the concept of a strong bathymetric control of trace fossil distribution, expressed in the Seilacher’s (1967) model. The numerous observations accumulated up to date allow one to infer that the “shallow-water” trace fossils, such as those described in this publication, as well as others, e.g., *Skolithos*, can occur in flysch, perhaps not in a very high density which remains typical of littoral sediments (cf. Frey & Pemberton, 1985). An exception is *Ophiomorpha*, which may be abundant in thick-bedded flysch (cf. Kern & Warme, 1974; observations reported herein – the Piwniczna Sandstone Member at Wierchomla Wielka). It may be concluded, that the inferences on paleodepth on the basis of trace fossils should be done with caution.

On the other hand, typical “deep-water” forms, such as *Helminthopsis* and *Paleodictyon* are noted sporadically in shallow marine sediments (e.g., Archer & Maples, 1984).

Trace fossil occurrence is controlled by many complex factors (eg., Byers, 1982), including oxygenation of sediment (Ekdale, 1988, with references). Seilacher’s (1967) model seems to embrace the basic ichnofacies archetypes showing a tendency to frequent repetitions at certain depth intervals though without any close and direct depth control (Frey & Pemberton, 1985, Frey *et al.*, 1990).

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## Streszczenie

### “PŁYTKOWODNE” SKAMIENIAŁOŚCI ŚLADOWE W PALEOGENSKIM FLISZU POŁUDNIOWEJ CZĘŚCI PŁASZCZOWINY MAGURSKIEJ, POLSKIE KARPATY ZEWNĘTRZNE

Alfred Uchman

W paleogeneńskich utworach fliszowych, w południowej części płaszczowiny magurskiej, znaleziono skamieniałości śladowe (Fig. 1) uważane powszechnie za płytkowodne, takie jak: *Rhizocorallium* ichnosp., *Ophiomorpha nodosa* Lund., *Ophiomorpha* ichnosp. indet. typ A i B, *Thalassinoides* ichnosp. i *Pelecypodichnus* ichnosp. (Fig. 2, Pl. I-V). Należą one zgodnie z batymetrycznym modelem rozmieszczenia skamieniałości śladowych Seilachera do płytkowodnych ichnofacji Skolithos i Cruziana (Seilacher, 1967).



Coraz częściej jednak spotyka się je, jak w opisywanym przypadku, w głębokomorskich utworach fliszowych (por. np. Crimes *et. al.*, 1981) wraz z typowymi przedstawicielami głębokowodnej ichnofacji Nereites (w opisywanym przypadku: *Paleodictyon*, *Urohelminthoida*, *Spirorhapha* i inne). Jest to jedno z wielu odstępstw (np. Byers, 1982) od powszechnie stosowanego modelu Seilachera (1967) Według nowszych poglądów (np. Frey *et. al.*, 1990) model ten przedstawia jedynie archetypy ichnofacji, które mają tendencję do występowania w pewnych przedziałach batymetrycznych, lecz bez ścisłego, bezpośredniego z nimi związku. Obecnie coraz więcej faktów świadczy o tym, że "płytkowodne" skamieniałości śladowe mogą występować niezbyt licznie w utworach fliszowych (por. Frey & Pemberton, 1985). Wyjątkiem jest tu *Ophiomorpha*, występująca licznie w niektórych profilach, na przykład w gruboławicowych piaskowcach ogniwa piaskowców z Piwnicznej (og). Skłania to do dużej ostrożności w interpretacji batymetrii na podstawie pojedynczych okazów, bez uwzględnienia złożonych czynników kontrolujących rozmieszczenie ichnofauny, zwłaszcza, że także "typowo głębokowodne" ichnorodzaje takie jak: *Helminthopsis* czy *Paleodictyon* notowane są sporadycznie z utworów płytkowodnych (np. Archer & Maples, 1984).

Według Crimes'a *et al.*, (1981) "płytkowodne" ichnorodzaje występują w proksymalnych częściach utworów fliszowych. Wiele z opisanych w niniejszej publikacji form zostało znalezionych jednak w co najmniej kilkusetmetrowych sekwencjach cienko- i średnioławicowego fliszu, to jest w utworach warstw belowskich (eocen) i formacji szczawnickiej (fm) (paleocen – eocen dolny), które uważane są za bardziej dystalne (por. np. Oszczytko, 1986). Wydaje się więc, że "płytkowodne" skamieniałości śladowe mogą się pojawiać niezależnie od subfacji fliszu.

## EXPLANATION OF PLATES

### Plate I

- 1 — *Ophiomorpha ?irregulaire*. Beloveža Beds (Lower – Middle Eocene), Łabowiec. Photo by P. Radzicki
- 2 — *Ophiomorpha – Thalassinoides* ichnosp. Beloveža Beds (Lower – Middle Eocene), Zasadne

### Plate II

- 1 — *Ophiomorpha ?irregulaire*. Beloveža Beds (Lower – Middle Eocene), Źeleźnikowa Wielka
- 2 — *Pelecypodichnus* ichnosp. (P), *Circulichnis* ichnosp. (C), *Sabularia simplex*. (S). Beloveža Beds (Lower – Middle Eocene), Źeleźnikowa Wielka

## Plate III

- 1 — *Thalassinoides* ichnosp. Beloveža Beds (Lower – Middle Eocene), Uhryń. Photo by P. Radzicki
- 2 — *Ophiomorpha nodosa*. Piwniczna Sandstone Member (Eocene), Milik. Photo by P. Radzicki
- 3 — *Rhizocorallium* ichnosp. Szczawnica Formation (Paleocene – Lower Eocene), Krościenko - Łąkcica. Photo by P. Radzicki
- 4 — *Pelecypodichnus* ichnosp. Beloveža Beds. (Lower – Middle Eocene), Glinka. Photo by P. Radzicki

## Plate IV

- 1 — *Thalassinoides* ichnosp. Beloveža Beds (Lower – Middle Eocene), Żeleźnikowa Wielka
- 2 — *Thalassinoides* ichnosp. Beloveža Beds (Lower – Middle Eocene), Soblówka. Photo by P. Radzicki
- 3 — *Tubulichnium incertum*. Szczawnica Formation (Paleocene – Lower Eocene), Krościenko - Łąkcica. Photo by P. Radzicki

## Plate V

- 1 — *Thalassinoides* ichnosp. Beloveža Beds (Lower – Middle Eocene), Roztoka
- 2 — *Ophiomorpha nodosa* in thick-bedded sandstones from the Piwniczna Sandstone Member (Eocene), Wierchomla Wielka; *b* – bedding surface. Scale bar = 20 cm

