

Supposedly lost syntype of the rough-toothed dolphin (*Steno bredanensis* (Lesson, 1828)) traced back at the Ghent University Museum

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Abstract: Van Breda (1829) published the first extensive description of the rough-toothed dolphin *Steno bredanensis* (Lesson, 1828). The whereabouts of the skull of the dolphin that Van Breda depicted, remained unknown. In the collection of the Ghent University Museum, skulls of three rough-toothed dolphins are present, without information on the locality or date of collection. The positions of the foramina in dorsal view of one of these skulls (MDV50426) perfectly match those in the depicted skull in Van Breda's publication. Beyond reasonable doubt, this is the specimen described in Van Breda (1829) as *Delphinus bredanensis* Lesson, 1828. There are two syntypes referred to in the taxon *Steno bredanensis* Lesson (1828). The first is the animal later depicted in Van Breda (1829). The second is a specimen from Brest (Brittany, France), however no parts of this specimen seem to be available anymore. Therefore, the rediscovery of the skull MDV50426 is important.

Keywords: rough-toothed dolphin, *Steno bredanensis*, syntype, Ghent University Museum.

Introduction

Van Breda (1829) published the first extensive description of the rough-toothed dolphin (*Steno bredanensis* (Lesson, 1828)) and he depicted details, especially of the skull and tooth morphology, of a specimen then described as *Delphinus bredanensis*. Van Breda included several interesting details, such as a long thin rostrum and the absence of a groove between rostrum and forehead. When Van Breda showed the drawings of the exterior and skull of an unknown dolphin species in 1825 to G. Cuvier, the latter realised

that a new dolphin species had to be added to his new book. As the printing process of the last volume of this extensive series on fossil bones was already in an advanced stage (Cuvier 1823-25), only a probable last minute annotation could be included as a correction note, but no proper name nor specific characteristics were included.

Lesson (1828) described the rough-toothed dolphin in a volume on cetaceans in the series on mammals and birds discovered since 1788, formally using the name *Delphinus bredanensis* Cuv. for the first time. Apart from the external discriminating criteria, he notably described the exterior of the specimen Van Breda observed, and mentioned a length of eight feet, a dorsal fin with a semilunar out-

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line and a semilunar tail fluke with an indentation [...] in the middle. Lesson (1828) continued describing the gradually sloping profile of the skull as most characteristic. Other peculiarities of the skull he mentioned were a compressed snout, broad nasal bones, touching the premaxillare, a prominent occipital ridge and as the temporal region is much larger, a smaller occipital region. However he did not mention the characteristic rough dental grooves nor the long mandibular symphysis.

Without further details, Lesson (1828) briefly mentioned a drawing sent from Brest (Brittany, France) which he also designated as *Delphinus bredanensis*. G. Cuvier's brother Frédéric mentions a specimen on a drawing from Brest, of which twenty years later the drawing was published (Cuvier 1836). Based on Lesson's (1828) description, this original drawing represents one of the syntypes.

The zoological collections of the Ghent University, as well as the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences in Brussels, hold several rough-toothed dolphin skulls, but according to De Smet (1974) it was not possible to determine whether one of these had belonged to this specimen. De Smet (1974) tried to reconstruct how a broken mandible of a rough-toothed dolphin that ended up in a ditch near Bruinisse (Zeeland, the Netherlands) could have been part of the dolphin Van Breda described. However, Heerebout et al. (2014) provide a more plausible explanation for the origin of that mandible, suggesting it was the discarded evidence for the bounty set up by the Dutch government to help support the local fisheries. As such, the whereabouts of the skull of the rough-toothed dolphin Van Breda depicted still remained unknown.

Therefore we investigated skulls and other clues of rough-toothed dolphins in zoological collections in Belgium and the Netherlands in order to identify the lost skull Van Breda described. We also mention the discriminating morphological criteria for this species provided by Lesson (1828) and Van Breda (1829), and compare them with the current criteria.

Material and methods

As Van Breda lectured at the Ghent University from 1822-1830 (Breure 1979), the Ghent University Museum plays a prominent role in the search for the skull described by Van Breda. The Ghent University Museum was founded in 1817 (as Rijksmuseum by Willem I, King of the Netherlands – at that time Belgium had not been founded) and, as zoological objects were needed for study and teaching, Coenraad Jacob Temminck, a well-known zoologist, was asked in 1818 to buy zoological specimens for the collections of the universities of Gent (Ghent), Leuven (Louvain) and Liège (Liege) (Poot et al. 2014). Gijzen (1938) mentions for example that Temmick bought zoological objects in a sale of Bullocks's Museum, London. Only in 1853 the registration of incoming objects ('Registre d'entrée') in the Ghent University Museum started (Dominick Verschelde, personal communication). In the collection of this museum, skulls of three rough-toothed dolphins are present: MDV50425, MDV50426 and MDV50427; the abbreviation MDV is the acronym for "Museum Dierkunde Vertebraten" (Museum Zoology Vertebrates). Each of them is labelled with typed general information for this species, reading (in translation): *C[lass] Mammalia, O[rder] Cetaceae, F[amily] Stenidae, Steno rostratus Desmarest, 1817, Indian Ocean*. No information on the exact origin, date or other peculiarities are provided.

The absence of a clear label with date and origin of a specimen of a rough-toothed dolphin, that would point at the original specimen Van Breda described in 1829, urges to look for an alternative method to establish the whereabouts of this specimen in a plausible manner. This could be the number and exact position of the foramina in dorsal view of the skull and the outline of the temporal-frontal suture. As the picture (drawing) of this specimen was available, comparison with eligible (museum) specimens could provide positive results.

Besides specimens from the Ghent University Museum, specimens deposited at other Belgian and Dutch museums were included as well; table 1 presents these specimens, including the museum numbers and museums.

Results

Positive indications in Gent (Ghent)

The text on the label of specimen MDV50425 reads “CN 2265 / RN 695” and on the occipital “2265” is written. In this specimen “*Delphinus Rostratis*, G. Cuv.” has been marked at the dorsal side of the left premaxilla in a more recent handwriting compared to the writing on specimen MDV50426. The label on specimen MDV50426 reads “*Steno rostratus* / CN 606”, while at the occipital “606 CS” is denoted. At the dorsal side of the left premaxilla “*Delphinus Bredanensis*” is written in late 18th - early 19th century handwriting. At the right premaxilla there is some unclear text of three characters (figure 1). Reading from lateral to medial, the first character is a “9” and the second probably is a “5”, while the

third character could be a symbol for an ordinal number, so interpreted as the 95th specimen from an unknown collection. Initials are drawn respectively on the vomer: “V”, the right nasal: “N”, the left premaxilla: “PM” (figure 2a). On the right frontal, an “F” and on the left maxilla an “M” are marked, suggesting use for studies of comparative anatomy. The tip of the maxilla of this specimen is cracked, possibly caused by a fall. Specimen MDV50427 bears no specific signs or writing, except for the fact that the tip of the snout is still covered with skin. In conclusion of the direct study of the three skulls deposited in Gent (Ghent), skull number MDV50246 having the name “*Delphinus Bredanensis*”, written in late 18th - early 19th century handwriting, indicates that this skull would be a candidate of being the one Van Breda reported on and subsequently collected.

In his Catalogue of the anatomical collection of the Ghent University Museum, Poelman (1868) mentions, in the part for the seventh mammalian order, among the nine skulls and/or mandibles of cetaceans, two skulls of rough-toothed dolphins, both indicated with the scientific name *Delphinus rostratis* G. Cuv.

Table 1. Studied available skull / mandibles of the rough-toothed dolphins (*Steno bredanensis*) in museal collections in Belgium, the Netherlands, all with museal numbers.

MDV: Museum Dierkunde Vertebraten” (Museum Zoology Vertebrates) of Ghent University Museum, Ghent; IRScNB: Institut royal des Sciences naturelles de Belgique, Bruxelles; KZGW: Koninklijk Zeeuwsch Genootschap der Wetenschappen (in Zeeuws Museum), Middelburg; ZMA: Zoological Museum Amsterdam, now Naturalis Biodiversity Centre, Leiden; NMR: Natuurhistorisch Museum Rotterdam, Rotterdam.

Museum number	Year/Origin	Material
MDV 50425	unknown	skull
MDV 50426	unknown	skull
MDV 50427	> 1868 / unknown	skull
IRScNB 1515γ / 822β / I.G. 2534	7-12-1865 / unknown	skull
IRScNB 1515 / 821 / I.G. 9332	> 1844, < 1936 / via Zoo Antwerp	skull
KZGW / NHG 22701	unknown	skull
KZGW / NHG 22703	1877 / Bruinisse, the Netherlands	jaw distally L/R
ZMA 13010	< 1889 / unknown	skull
ZMA 13347	1948 / Cambérène, Sénégal	skull
ZMA 31176	1969 / Dakar, Sénégal	skull
NMR 9990-00388	1892 / Luanda, Angola	skull



Figure 1. Left and right (upper) premaxilla of specimen MDV50426, reading respectively “*Delphinus Bredanensis*” and (supposedly) “95th”.

/ *Delphinus bredanensis* Fisher (obviously meant as synonyms). The first one in this Catalogue has the number 6 and the second one has the catalogue number 2265. The latter must refer to the skull with 2265 on the occipital (= specimen MDV50425). We suppose that after some time Poelman or a later curator of the collection started a new numeration system: “Collectie Nummer” (= CN) and “Collection Systématique” (= CS). There was a good reason to do so, as many objects of different orders had the same number. The catalogue of Poelman seems to be enumerating the objects brought together from different origins, with existing collection numbers. Collection number 6 can also be found on the skull of a bird (rhinoceros hornbill), on a preparation of the muscles of a dog, and on a general preparation of a dog. For that reason someone must have changed the number 6 of the cetaceans into number 606 in the new numeration system. Another cetacean specimen, e.g. “Épaulard à tête ronde *Delphinus globiceps* [long-finned pilot whale (*Globicephala melas*)]”, according to Poelman (1868) with catalogue number 8, received number 608 in this system. In

the catalogue of Poelman (1868) no skeletons, skulls or other body parts of rough-toothed dolphin are mentioned. We suppose specimen MDV50427 has been collected after Poelman completed his catalogue in 1868 as it is not mentioned in the catalogue.

So there are strong indications that the skull labelled CN 606 and 606 CS (= specimen MDV50426) on the occipital is identical with number 6 in the catalogue of Poelman (1868), being the lowest number that rough-toothed dolphin skulls or any other cetacean received in this catalogue of the collected mammal specimens of the Ghent University Museum.

MDV50426 compared with the depicted specimen

The condition of specimen MDV50426 is fairly good: apart from the mentioned (post-mortally) broken tip of the combined premaxilla and maxilla, no other damages of the skull are present and almost all teeth are in situ. However, the tips of most of the teeth are crumbled, all in a characteristic manner, leav-

Table 2. Skull measurements (mm) and tooth counts of the rough-toothed dolphins (*Steno bredanensis*) in the collection of the Ghent University Museum. Measurements are according to Robineau et al. (1994a). The ranges are taken from the literature and provided for comparison with the measurements of MDV50246.

* in Miyazaki & Perrin 1994 ** in Maignet 1994

Specimen	MDV50426	Range (n)
Condylobasal length	531	472–555 (66)*
Rostrum length	309	274–343 (59)*
Rostrum width at base	105	87–119 (58)*
Rostrum width (halfway)	52	38–64 (58)*
Postorbital width	219	202–239 (6)*
Praeorbital width	182	169–196 (6)*
Zygomatic width	223	188 and 214 (2)**
Mandible length	438	431 and 445 (2)**
Mandible height (L/R)	86/88	83–84 (2)**
Length of mandibular symphysis	146	ca. 1/3 mandible length*
Upper tooth count (L/R)	24/24	19–26*
Lower tooth count (L/R)	22/23	19–28*

ing several segmental fractures in occlusal view of the remnant tooth. Deposits of dust in different shades of grey reflect that the crumbling events took place at different moments in time. The condition of the teeth suggest a long conservation, consistent with the longest stored rough-toothed dolphin skulls in the Ghent University Museum, in suboptimal and unstable climatic conditions.

The mandibles are not fused, but fixed together at the symphysis. Based on the ossification of the cranial sutures and the worn dental ridges, the individual the skull belonged to was probably an adult. The standard skull measurements of specimen MDV50426 are listed in table 2.

In the next step to find out if one of the skulls could have been the one depicted in van Breda (1829), we compared the foramina of the skulls in dorsal view (figure 2A, B) with the drawing. The positions of the dorsal infraorbital foramina in the right maxilla (1, 2, 3, 5, 6) in the skull of MDV50426 perfectly matched those in the depicted skull in Van Breda, as is the case for the premaxillary foramen (4) in the right premaxilla. The foramina in the left maxilla (13, 14, 15 (three foramina in a row), 16) and also the premaxillary foramen (17) in the left premaxilla are in identical positions.

The right ascending process of the premaxilla (7: long, broad and as the broad end of a tie) and the left equivalent (8: short, narrow as the other end of the same tie) are very similar. The skull as well as the drawing show a rough, broad, raised ridge on the frontal (9, nuchal crest) and well delimited semi-circular depressions on both sides on the supraoccipital shield (10). The suture between nasals and frontals in skull and drawing show the same position and forms, as well as a very similar, slight asymmetry (11, 12).

Despite numerous superficial indentations, the parieto-squamosal suture in the temporal fossa of Van Breda's illustration and of MDV50426 (figure 3A, B) show the same basic outline in right lateral view.

The tooth count in MDV50426 for the number of right upper teeth/alveoles, left upper teeth/alveoles, right lower teeth/alveoles and left lower teeth/alveoles equals 23, 23, 23, 23 respectively. There is, however a contradiction in Van Breda's (1829) paper. He explicitly remarks the number of teeth being 46 for each cheek. This is in accordance with the depicted number of the lower cheek in Pl. I, figure 3 (figure 4), being 23 for both sides. However,

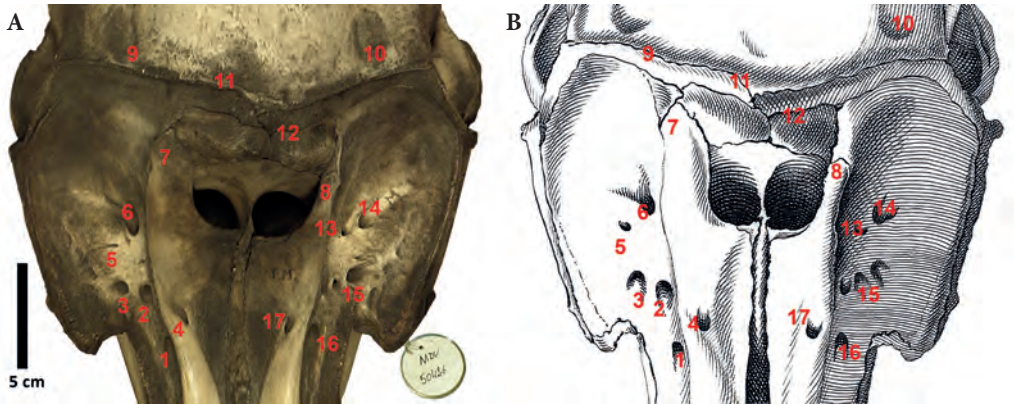


Figure 2. Dorsal view of the skull MDV50426 (A) and a reprint of figure 1 of Plate II (Van Breda 1829) (B). Initials (in black) drawn respectively on the vomer: “V”, the right nasal: “N”, the left premaxilla: “PM”; numbers in red indicate the dorsal infraorbital foramina, premaxillary foramina and other cranial features observed in both MDV50426 and the figure by Van Breda.

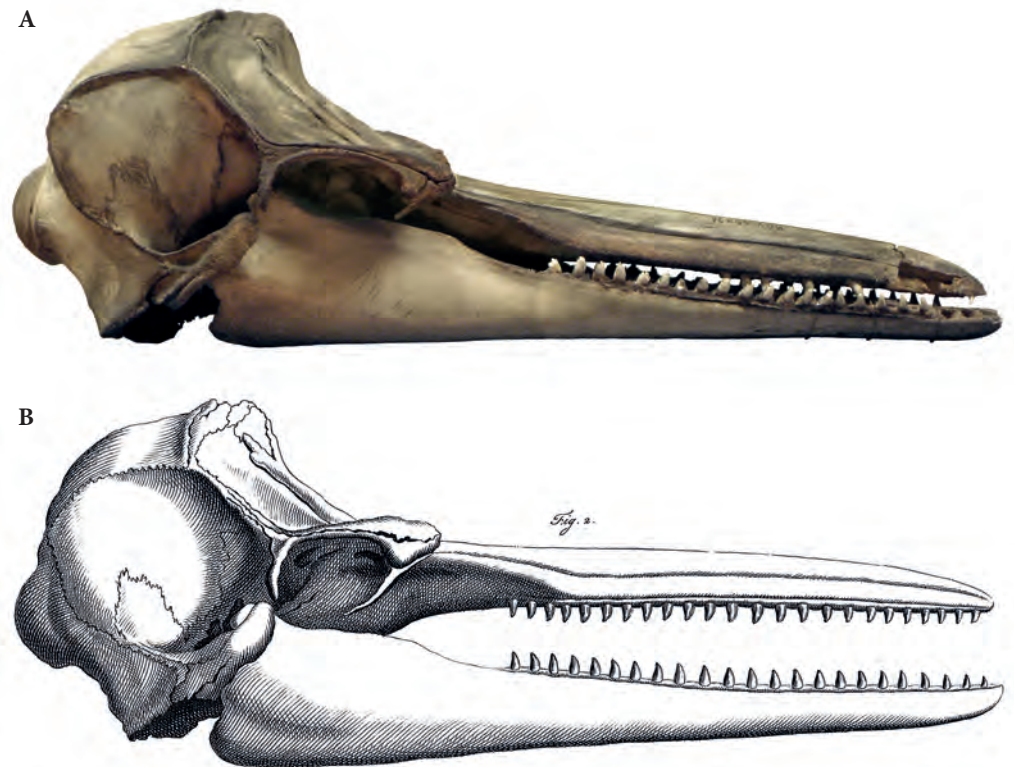


Figure 3. A. Right lateral view of the skull MDV50426. B. Reprint of figure 2 of Plate II (Van Breda 1829). The numbers in both MDV50426 and the figure by Van Breda of right upper and lower teeth in the figure of Van Breda (1829), being respectively 24 and 23.

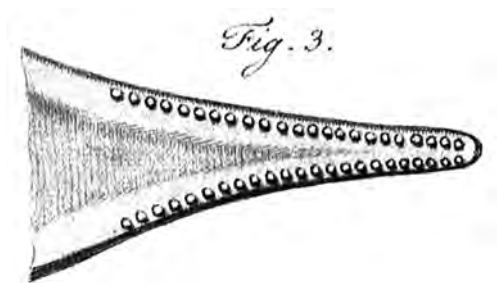


Figure 4. The mandible with the right and left lower tooth count of 23 both sides (as in Fig. 3 of Pl. I (in Van Breda 1829).

on Plate II, figure 2 (see figure 3B), showing the right lateral side, the upper tooth count equals 24, while the lower tooth count is 23.

Other museal specimens

Other specimens of the rough-toothed dolphin in Belgian and Dutch museal collections, listed in table 1, were collected well after 1825-1829 (IRScNB 1515γ / 822β / I.G. 2534, IRScNB 1515 / 821 / I.G. 9332, ZMA13010, ZMA13347, ZMA31176, NMR 9990-00388) and therefore can be eliminated as having served as the model for the drawings in Van Breda (1829). Dorsal and lateral views of the unknown or not precisely dated specimens (other than MDV 50426) in table 1, MDV 50425, MDV 50427 and KZGW / NHG 22701 have been studied. They show a pattern of the dorsal foraminae and/or the outline of the right parieto-squamosal suture which is distinct from the drawings of Van Breda (see also figures 2, 3). The tooth or socket count of the mandible of specimen NHG22703, being 22 at both sides, does not correspond to the number of 23 in figure 3, Pl. I, and figure 2, Pl. II, in Van Breda (1829).

We conclude that the picture of the dorsal and right lateral view of the skull in Van Breda (1829) has been drawn after the specimen MDV50426, kept at the Ghent University Museum.

Discriminating morphological criteria

Nowadays the criteria that distinguish the rough-toothed dolphin from all other European dolphin species are the long muzzle and sloping profile without a furrowed line for the external body shape and, for the skull, the compressed snout, the long mandibular symphysis and rough dental grooves (Robineau et al. 1994b).

Lesson (1828), describing the exterior characteristics of the species after the drawings of the specimen of Van Breda, mentioned the gradually sloping profile of the head as most characteristic for the species. For the characteristics of the skull, Lesson (1828) furthermore mentioned a compressed snout, broad nasal bones touching the premaxilla, and the prominent occipital ridge as well as the smaller occipital. However, he did not mention the characteristic rough dental grooves nor the long mandibular symphysis.

A year after Lesson (1828) Van Breda (1829) presented the gradually sloping profile in his description of *Delphinus Bredanensis*, but he described no other currently accepted discriminating details. However, in Plate I, figure 4, and to a lesser extent in Plate II, figure 2 of Van Breda (1829), the dental grooves are clearly depicted. Also in Plate I, figure 3, a long mandibular symphysis is depicted (more than eight teeth are depicted almost parallel, suggesting a long symphysis), but it is not described in the text.

Discussion and conclusion

There is a perfect match between MDV50426, the specimen from the Ghent University Museum, and the specimen depicted in Van Breda (1829), while no match could be found with the other specimens studied in the collections of the Ghent University Museum, Naturalis Biodiversity Centre, Leiden, Koninklijk Zeeuwsch Genootschap der Wetenschappen in the Zeeuws Museum, Mid-

delburg and Natuurhistorisch Museum Rotterdam. Therefore, beyond reasonable doubt, the specimen described in Van Breda (1829) is the skull MDV50426, *Delphinus bredanensis* Lesson, 1828, nowadays renamed as *Steno bredanensis* (Lesson, 1828). This perfect match is corroborated by inscription of “*Delphinus Bredanensis*” in late 18th - early 19th century handwriting on skull MDV50426 and by the numbering in the catalogue of Poelman (1868).

Already in the 19th century there was a mystery around the origin of the rough-toothed dolphin Van Breda had described. A summary of the discussions was given by De Smet (1974). Recently Smeenk & Camphuysen (2016) followed Schlegel (1862), where he stated “[...] caught near the mouth of the river Scheldt”, as he, Schlegel, knew Van Breda and undoubtedly got this information directly from the him.

There is no holotype of the taxon *Steno bredanensis*, but there are two syntypes. The first is the animal drawn by Van Breda which Lesson (1828) referred to and this drawing with description was later published by Van Breda (1829). The second one is a specimen from Brest, also drawn, and mentioned by Lesson (1828). Recently West et al. (2011) mention that the fate of the type specimen is unclear and it may have been lost. It is therefore important that the skull MDV50426, which was the original model for the drawing of this syntype, has been rediscovered in the depository of the Ghent University Museum.

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Samenvatting

Verloren gewaand syntype van snaveldolfin (*Steno bredanensis* (Lesson, 1828)) gelokaliseerd in het Universitair Museum Gent, België

Van Breda (1829) publiceerde de eerste uitgebreide beschrijving van de snaveldolfin (*Steno bredanensis* (Lesson, 1828)), inclusief gedetailleerde tekeningen van de schedel. Waar de schedel van deze dolfin werd bewaard, was tot nu toe niet bekend. Na gedetailleerd onderzoek van schedels van de snaveldolfin in Belgische en Nederlandse collecties en vergelijking met de afbeelding in Van Breda (1829) besluiten we dat een van de schedels in de collectie van het Gents Universitair Museum ongetwijfeld deze is die door Van Breda werd beschreven en staat afgebeeld. De uiterlijke kenmerken die snaveldolfinen onderscheiden van alle andere Europese dolfinen zijn de lange snuit en het geleidelijk oplopende profiel zonder groef en voor de schedel de zijdelings samengedrukte snuit, de lange symfyse van de onderkaken en de gegroefde tanden. Lesson (1828) beschrijft wel het geleidelijk oplopende profiel en de zijdelings samengedrukte snuit, maar hij vermeldt de karakteristieke lange symfyse van de onderkaken en de gegroefde tanden niet. Van Breda (1829) vermeldt ook het geleidelijk oplopende profiel, maar de gegroefde tanden en lange symfyse staan alleen afgebeeld. Er zijn twee syntypes van het taxon *Steno bredanensis* waar Lesson (1828) naar verwijst. De eerste is het dier afgebeeld in Van Breda (1829). Het tweede is een specimen van Brest (Bretagne, Frankrijk), ook getekend. Van dit laatste dier zijn mogelijk geen delen bewaard gebleven. Omdat het een van de twee syntypes is, is het belangrijk dat schedel MDV50426 in de collectie van het Gents Universitair Museum als dusdanig gelokaliseerd werd.

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