



## **PRESS RELEASE**

EMBARGOED UNTIL TUESDAY 2 November 2010

Unique Fossil Dredged Up Near the Dutch Coast

### **Unknown Species of Dolphin Discovered in the North Sea**

The North Sea bottom has revealed another secret. A heavily fossilised bone discovered by a fishing trawler off the Dutch coast in 2008 appears to belong to a yet unknown extinct species of dolphin that is now officially described and named *Platalearostrum hoekmani* by Klaas Post and Erwin Kompanje, honorary curators of the Natural History Museum Rotterdam.

Hoekman's blunt-snouted dolphin, as the new species is called in English, reached a length of at least four to six metres and possessed an extremely short and spoon-shaped snout that supported a large, high and balloon-like forehead. The bizarre looking dolphin roamed the waters of what we now call the North Sea about two to three million years ago. Its closest relatives among extant marine mammals are the pilot whales.

The unique fossil – a part of the snout – is on display in the Natural History Museum of Rotterdam, together with a scale-model of the characteristic balloon-like head.

The scientific name *Platalearostrum hoekmani* refers to the unique spoon-shape of the skull (*platalea* = spoon; *rostrum* = snout) and to Albert Hoekman, who discovered the fossil among the fish in the nets of the trawler GO 28 and donated it to the Rotterdam museum. Thanks to Dutch fishermen, thousands of fossil remains of both terrestrial and marine mammals have become available for research.

The official scientific description and name of the new genus and species was published in the journal *Deinsea* of the Natural History Museum Rotterdam. Of the authors, Klaas Post discovered several unknown fossil species, among which the recently described *Livyatan melvillei*, a giant raptorial sperm whale from Peru. Erwin Kompanje has specialised knowledge of skeletal pathology in whales and dolphins. He concluded that the exceptional protruding premaxilla of *Platalearostrum* is natural and not caused by a pathological bone condition.

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*The paper:* Post, K. & Kompanje, E.J.O., 2010 - A new dolphin (Cetacea, Delphinidae) from the Plio-Pleistocene of the North Sea - *DEINSEA* 14: 1-12 [ISSN 0923-9308]. Published 2 November 2010 [download PDF: <http://bit.ly/d2SIM3> ]

More information: Kees Moeliker +31 10 2660463 | +31 6 53778445

High-resolution images: <http://tinyurl.com/2ed4a6k>

The authors of the publication can be reached at +31 6 236225140 [Klaas Post, in China at the moment] and +31 6 53837655 [Erwin Kompanje, in Rotterdam]

### **Natural History Museum Rotterdam**

Westzeedijk 345 (Museumpark) 3015 AA Rotterdam, The Netherlands

+31 10 4364222 | [info@nmr.nl](mailto:info@nmr.nl) | [www.nmr.nl](http://www.nmr.nl)