A PRELIMINARY DESCRIPTION OF NEW LATE CRETACEOUS CHELONIAN REMAINS FROM SANT'ANNA DI ALFAEDO (VERONA, ITALY)

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The first Late Cretaceous remains from the area of Sant'Anna di Alfaedo (Verona Province, NE Italy) were discovered in 1852 at Monte Guaite and later described as the new taxon *Protosphargis veronensis* Capellini, 1884. About a century later, a second specimen was found at Monte Loffa, in the same area. This marine turtle with highly reduced carapace and plastron has been variously considered either a dermochelyoid or an aberrant pancheloniid. More recently, the surroundings of Monte Loffa have also yielded still undescribed marine chelonians hosted in the collections of the Museo Paleontologico e Preistorico di Sant'Anna di Alfaedo (MPPS). We preliminarily report on the specimens MPPS 45299-300, 45336, 45338, 45339-41 and an unnumbered slab ("Giovanni Benedetti 2003"), represented mostly by semiarticulated shells, some limb bones and scarce cranial remains still partly embedded in upper Turonian–Coniacian slabs of Scaglia Rossa. At least some skeletal elements are still covered by a patina of sediment and are partially eroded, but others are better preserved. In particular, the slab MPPS 45299 hosts two humeri, one of which is complete, a lower jaw, approximately 20 vertebrae, some of which are arranged serially and a few undetermined skeletal elements. The lower jaw exposes only the ventro-lateral side, has a narrow V shape, and measures 105 mm in length, with a 40 mm-long symphysis and an un-denticulate labial margin of the dentary. Because of the poor preservation of the remains, it is not possible to identify the limits of the composing skeletal elements. MPPS 45300 hosts a humerus, a scapula, a coracoid, a femur, a pelvic girdle and some elements of the shell, together with some undeterminable skeletal fragments. The shell fragments include a hypoplastron with an indented margin and 3 neurals with a 6A-shape and a low dorsal keel. MPPS 45338 hosts a partially-preserved carapace exposing the visceral surface and composed by neurals 1-8 (with a 6A-shape) and costals 1-8. Neurals are hexagonal and their antero-lateral margin is shorter than the postero-lateral one. Since the dorsal surface of the carapace is not visible, it is not possible to assess the pattern of the horny elements, if any. MPPS 45341 is constituted by two specular slabs, each one containing a section of the same carapace, but not showing the external surface possibly ornate by scute sulci. The preserved portion of the carapace is represented by the nuchal, neurals 1-7 and costals 1-7. The nuchal is only partial but clearly pentagonal in shape, very wide and short. Neurals are hexagonal, 6A-shaped and slightly longitudinally keeled, whereas only the medial portions (the ones contacting neurals) of costals are preserved. Based on humeral bone morphology and size we preliminary distinguish two taxa. The MPPS 45341 humerus is most reminiscent of *Allopleuron hoffmanni* from the type-Maastrichtian but it belonged to a much smaller taxon (~ 1 m total body length). It also shows affinities with "*Protostega*" *anglica* from the Albian of England. The associated lower jaw, however, exhibits a significantly more expanded symphysis than in *A. hoffmanni*. The humerus of the unnumbered slab ("Giovanni Benedetti 2003") represents a larger taxon (~ 2 m total body length) and shows characteristics of *Atlantochelys mortoni* from the Maastrichtian of New Jersey but is of considerably smaller size. The shell MPPS 45339 may represent a third taxon that is similar to basal protostegids. At this point none of the specimens can be confidently attributed to *Protosphargis veronensis*.