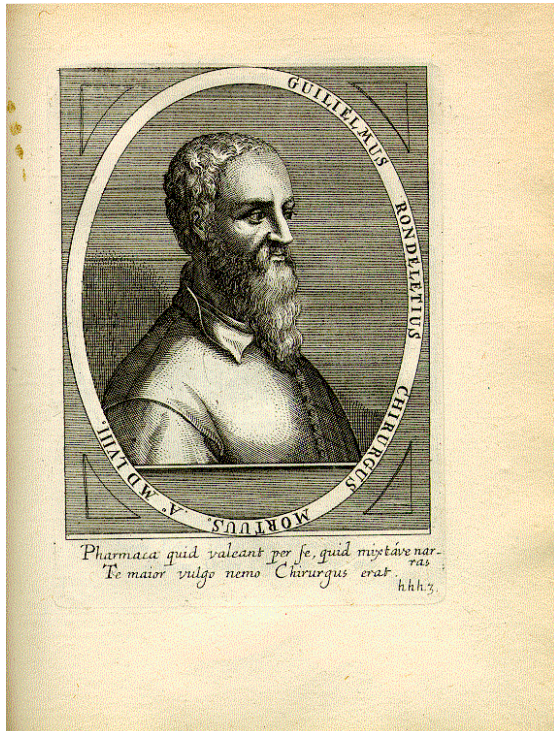


CASE: GSAF 1554.00.00

DATE: Prior to 1554

LOCATION: Mediterranean Sea

NARRATIVE: Describing a large shark, possibly a white shark, Rondelet wrote, “the dogfish is so miraculously large that it can scarcely be dragged on a cart by two horses. It eats other fishes and is very gluttonous; indeed it devours whole men, which has been found out through experience. For at Nice and at Marseilles dogfish have been caught in whose stomach an entire, completely armed man has been found.”



SOURCE: Guillaume Rondelet (1507-1566) was professor of medicine at the university of Montpellier in southern France. In 1554 he published the first book on the natural history of fishes: *Libri de piscibus marinis in quibus verae piscium effigies expressae sunt*.

In addition to his medical practice, Rondelet had considerable family money. His friends included naturalists and botanists from the University of Montpellier, and he became passionately interested in fishes. He had observation tanks constructed at a villa where water was piped in from the Fountain of Albe, an underground spring. There is some evidence that he had salt-water tanks as well.

His observations were sometimes supplemented by folk tales at the expense of

accuracy. As example, he describes a “bishop fish, covered with scales, carrying a miter and pontifical ornaments,” which was probably a dried stingray — a curio found even today in shell shops along with inflated and lacquered puffer fish and bleached coral. The same woodcuts, facts, and misinformation were copied and plagiarized by authors of other fish books for the next hundred years.

