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1 **Development and growth of the pectoral girdle and fin skeleton in the extant coelacanth *Latimeria***
2 ***chalumnae***

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22 **Abstract**

23 The monobasal pectoral fins of living coelacanths and lungfishes are homologous to the forelimbs of
24 tetrapods and are thus critical to investigate the origin thereof. However, it remains unclear whether
25 the similarity in the asymmetrical endoskeletal arrangement the pectoral fins of coelacanths reflects
26 the evolution of the pectoral appendages in sarcopterygians. Here, we describe for the first time the
27 development of the pectoral fin and shoulder girdle in the extant coelacanth *Latimeria chalumnae*,
28 based on the tomographic acquisition of a growth series. The pectoral girdle and pectoral fin
29 endoskeleton are formed early in the development with a radially outward growth of the endoskeletal
30 elements. The visualization of the pectoral girdle during development shows a reorientation of the
31 girdle between the fetus and pup 1 stages, creating a contact between the scapulocoracoids and the
32 clavicles in the ventro-medial region. Moreover, we observed a splitting of the pre- and post-axial
33 cartilaginous plates in respectively pre-axial radials and accessory elements on one hand, and in post-
34 axial accessory elements on the other hand. The mechanisms involved in the splitting of the
35 cartilaginous plates appear, however, different from those involved in the formation of radials in
36 actinopterygians. Our results show a proportional reduction of the proximal pre-axial radial of the fin
37 rendering the external morphology of the fin more lobe-shaped and a spatial reorganization of
38 elements resulting from the fragmentation of the two cartilaginous plates. *Latimeria* development
39 hence supports previous interpretations of the asymmetrical pectoral fin skeleton as being
40 plesiomorphic for coelacanths and sarcopterygians.

41 **Keywords**

42 Actinistia, sarcopterygian, ontogeny, fin, endoskeleton, pectoral girdle, tomography

43 **Introduction :**

44 Among the sarcopterygians, the clade Actinistia is today only represented by the coelacanth genus
45 *Latimeria*, and is considered as the sister group to the Rhipidistia, represented by living lungfishes and
46 tetrapods (Ahlberg, 1991; Forey, 1998; Friedman *et al.*, 2007; Clack, 2012; Amemiya *et al.*, 2013). This
47 clade presents a long evolutionary history with its origin dating back to the Early Devonian (Johanson
48 *et al.*, 2006; Friedman, 2007; Zhu *et al.*, 2012b). Coelacanths are well represented in the fossil record,
49 with about 40 described genera and more than 130 species (Forey, 1998). The clade also presents an
50 important diversity of form, size and ecology (Forey, 1998; Friedman & Coates, 2006; Casane &
51 Laurenti, 2013; Cavin & Guinot, 2014; Cavin *et al.*, 2017), and was considered to have gone extinct at
52 the end of the Mesozoic Era (Smith, 1939). Today, there are two known species: *Latimeria chalumnae*
53 (Smith, 1939) in Western Indian Ocean and *L. menadoensis* (Erdmann *et al.*, 1998; Pouyaud *et al.*, 1999)
54 discovered offshore of Sulawesi, Indonesia.

55 Because of their close relationships with tetrapods, many aspects of the biology and development of
56 the coelacanths are of interest to better understand the origin, the anatomical characteristics and the
57 evolution of osteichthyans (Dutel *et al.*, 2019) and early land vertebrates (Fricke & Hissmann, 1992).
58 Pectoral fins of coelacanths are moreover of particular interest, partly due to the fact that the paired
59 fin skeleton of the coelacanth is organized along a metapterygial axis (Millot & Anthony, 1958). This
60 organisation is similar to that of the endochondral skeletal elements of lungfishes, and tetrapod limbs
61 (Shubin & Alberch, 1986; Mabee, 2000). Consequently, the paired lobed-fin of sarcopterygian fishes is
62 considered homologous to the tetrapod limb (i.e. Gregory and Raven, 1941; Westoll, 1943; Fricke and
63 Hissmann, 1992; Clack, 2009). Moreover, the first elements of the pectoral fin of the coelacanth (the
64 first mesomere, the first pre-axial radial, and the second mesomere) are considered to be homologous
65 to the stylopodal and zeugopodal elements of the tetrapod limb (Fricke & Hissmann, 1992; Johanson
66 *et al.*, 2007; Miyake *et al.*, 2016). The majority of studies concerning the water-to-land transition of
67 vertebrates have focused on the pectoral appendages given their importance during locomotion in
68 transitional and early terrestrial vertebrates (Shubin *et al.*, 2006; Pierce *et al.*, 2012; Standen *et al.*,
69 2014). Coelacanths have also been considered as being relevant in the context of terrestrialization
70 because they move their fins in an alternating manner, reminiscent of the movements of tetrapod
71 limbs (Fricke *et al.*, 1987; Forey, 1998; Clack, 2012). However, the fins of the extant coelacanth clearly
72 do not have a function of “legs”, i.e. crawling on sea bottom, as had been supposed by Smith (1956).
73 Whereas lungfishes are more closely related to tetrapods than coelacanths, as early as the beginning
74 of their evolutionary history, they present modified paired fins with a high degree of symmetry that
75 do not reflect the pectoral fin of early sarcopterygians (Ahlberg, 1989; Coates *et al.*, 2002; Coates,
76 2003; Friedman *et al.*, 2007). On the other hand, early tetrapodomorphs and coelacanths show

77 asymmetrical fins (Ahlberg, 1989; Friedman et al., 2007), where the pre-axial and post-axial side of the
78 fin do not have the same arrangement around the metapterygial axis. It remains unknown, however,
79 whether the evolution of the pectoral fin of coelacanths is informative about the evolution of the
80 pectoral appendages in sarcopterygians more generally.

81 The pectoral fin and girdle development of the living coelacanth remains unknown. Consequently, a
82 detailed anatomical description of the morphology and anatomy of the pectoral fin and girdle at
83 different ontogenetic stages of the extant coelacanth is crucial for an understanding of the
84 development of the pectoral fin of *Latimeria* in comparison to fossil coelacanths and tetrapodomorphs.
85 The development of the endoskeleton of the pectoral fin and girdle in *Latimeria* is likely to be
86 informative for reconstructing the plesiomorphic configuration of the pectoral appendages in
87 sarcopterygians (Coates *et al.*, 2002; Amaral & Schneider, 2017). Here, we study the development of
88 the pectoral fin and girdle in the extant coelacanth by describing this anatomical complex in a unique
89 ontogenetic series of five stages constituted of three prenatal stages and two post-natal stages (Dutel
90 *et al.*, 2019).

91 **Materials and methods :**

92 *Specimens*

93 The developmental series includes five stages from several museum collections (Fig. 1). The first stage
94 is a fetus of 5 cm total length (TL) (CCC 202.1) (Nulens *et al.*, 2011) found inside the female specimen
95 CCC 202 captured off the Tanzanian coast in 2005 and conserved in the collection of the South African
96 Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity, Grahamstown, South Africa (SAIAB 76199). Stage 2 is a pup of 32.3
97 cm TL with a yolk sac (CCC 29.5), found inside the female specimen CCC 29 captured off the Comores
98 Island in 1969 and conserved in the collection of the MNHN, Paris, France (MNHN AC 2012-22). Stage
99 3 is a late pup which yolk sac is resorbed of 34.8 cm TL (CCC 162.21) found inside the female CCC 162
100 captured off the coast of Mozambique in 1991, and conserved in the collection of the Zoologische
101 Staatssammlung, Munich, Germany (ZSM 28409). Stage 4 is a juvenile of 42.5 cm TL (CCC 94) captured
102 off Grande Comore in 1974 and conserved in the collection of the MNHN, Paris, France (MNHN AC
103 2012-27). The adult specimen (stage 5) principally used in this study is a male of 130 cm TL (CCC 22)
104 captured in Grande Comore in 1960 and conserved in the collection of the MNHN, Paris, France (MNHN
105 AC 2012-18). Direct anatomical observations were also made on isolated pectoral fin skeleton of
106 several adult specimens: CCC 6 (MNHN AC 2012-4), CCC 7 (MNHN AC 2012-5), CCC 14 (MNHN AC 2012-
107 11) and CCC 19 (MNHN AC 2012-15). Specimens from the MNHN, Paris are preserved in a 6-7%
108 formaldehyde solution, while the others are preserved in a 70 % aqueous ethanol solution.

109 *Imaging*

110 Stage 1 – Fetus (CCC 202.1)

111 The specimen was scanned using long propagation phase-contrast synchrotron X-ray
112 microtomography at the ID19 beamline of the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility (ESRF),
113 Grenoble (France). It was imaged at a voxel size 6.5 μm using a pink beam achieved with a W150
114 wiggler at a gap of 50 mm and filtered with 2 mm of aluminium, 0.25 mm of copper and 0.2 mm of
115 gold. The scintillator was a 250- μm -thick LuAG:Ce (lutetium–aluminium–garnet) crystal. The resulting
116 detected spectrum was centred on 73 keV with a bandwidth of 17 keV FWHM (full width at half
117 maximum). The detector was a FreLoN 2K14 charge coupled device (CCD) camera mounted on a lens
118 system. To obtain a sufficient propagation phase-contrast effect, a distance of 3m between the sample
119 and the detector was used. The final reconstruction (13 μm) was obtained after binning with the
120 software ImageJ.

121 Stage 2 – Pup 1 (with yolk sac) (CCC 29.5)

122 The specimen was scanned using long propagation phase-contrast synchrotron X-ray
123 microtomography at the ID19 beamline of the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility (ESRF),
124 Grenoble (France). It was scanned at a voxel size of 23.34 μm and using a propagation distance of 13m
125 to maximize the phase-contrast effect. The beam produced by the ID19 W150 wiggler at a gap of 59mm
126 was filtered by 2.8mm of aluminium and 1.4mm of copper, resulting in an average detected energy of
127 77.4 keV. The scintillator was a 2000- μm -thick LuAG:Ce (lutetium–aluminium–garnet) crystal. The
128 detector was a PCO edge 4.2 sCMOS. The final reconstruction (46.68 μm) was obtained after binning
129 with the software ImageJ.

130 Stage 3 – Pup 2 (with yolk sac resorbed) (CCC 162.21)

131 The specimen was scanned using long propagation phase-contrast synchrotron X-ray
132 microtomography at the ID19 beamline of the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility (ESRF),
133 Grenoble (France). It was scanned at a voxel size of 30.45 μm using the ID19 W150 wiggler at a gap of
134 50mm filtered by 2mm of aluminium, 0.25mm of copper and 0.25mm of tungsten. The scintillator,
135 detector and distance between the sample and the detector were the same as for fetus. The final
136 reconstruction (60.90 μm) was obtained after binning in ImageJ.

137 Stage 4 – Juvenile (CCC 94)

138 The specimen was scanned twice, once at the ESRF (Grenoble, France) and once using an MRI scan at
139 the ICM (Paris, France). At the ESRF, the specimen was scanned at a voxel size of 28.43 μm and using
140 a propagation distance of 13m to maximize the phase-contrast effect. The beam produced by the
141 ID19 W150 wiggler at a gap of 30mm was filtered by 2mm of aluminium and 15mm of copper, resulting

142 in an average detected energy of 170 keV with a bandwidth of 85 keV FWHM. The detector camera
143 was a FreLoN 2K charge coupled device mounted on a lens system composed of a 750-mm-thick
144 LuAG:Ce scintillator. The final reconstruction (56.86 μm) was obtained after binning in ImageJ, and
145 used for the 3D-rendering of the pectoral girdle. As the contrast was not excellent, possibly due to a
146 historical treatment by injection of a colloidal baryte solution (Anthony, 1980), the specimen was re-
147 scanned in MRI at the Centre for NeuroImaging Research, ICM (Brain & Spine Institute). MRI was
148 performed at 3T with a Siemens Tim TRIO (Siemens, Germany) system. Images were acquired with a
149 3D Flash sequence with an isotropic resolution of 300 μm . Parameters were: Matrix size =
150 640*300*256; TR/TE (ms) = 18/4.73; Flip Angle = 10°; Spectral Width = 100 kHz; Number of averages
151 = 20; Total acquisition time was 7 hours and 41 minutes. The RMI data were used for the 3D-rendering
152 of the pectoral fin endoskeleton.

153 Synchrotron data were reconstructed using a filtered back-projection algorithm coupled with a single
154 distance phase-retrieval process (Paganin *et al.*, 2002; Sanchez *et al.*, 2012). For each sample, all the
155 sub-scans were reconstructed separately, converted into 16-bit TIFF stacks and then concatenated to
156 generate a single complete scan of each specimen. The ring artefacts were corrected on the
157 reconstructed slices using a specific tool developed at the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility
158 (Lyckegaard *et al.*, 2011).

159 Stage 5 – Adult (CCC 22)

160 The specimen CCC 22 was scanned with a high-resolution computerized axial tomography scanning
161 (CAT scan) in a Parisian Hospital (France) using the following scanning parameters: effective energy
162 120 kV, current 158 mA, voxel size 742 μm and 1,807 views.

163 The slices were reconstructed and exported into 16-bit TIFF stacks using the phoenix datos|x 2.0
164 reconstruction software, and exported into 16-bit TIFF stacks.

165 *Segmentation and 3D-reconstruction method*

166 For all the specimens, segmentation and three-dimensional rendering were done using the software
167 MIMICS Innovation Suite 20.0 (Materialise).

168 **Results :**

169 *The pectoral girdle*

170 In the adult, the pectoral girdle is composed of four flattened and elongated dermal bones – the
171 clavicle, the cleithrum, the anocleithrum and the extracleithrum – and one endochondral bone, the
172 scapulocoracoid as described by Millot & Anthony (1958) (Fig. 2). The girdle forms an arc posterior to

173 the branchial arches. Since the general morphology of the pectoral girdle does not change between the
174 different stages, our illustrations depict pup 2 only (Fig. 2).

175 The pectoral girdle is already well developed in the fetus, and does not change dramatically in the four
176 successive stages (Fig. 3). Indeed, the bones continue to grow, but conserve their general shape.
177 However, there is a shift in orientation of the complete pectoral complex (Fig. 4) between the fetus
178 and pup 1. In the fetus, the medial margins of the girdles are oriented toward the ventral side of the
179 embryo, there is no contact between the anterior part of the girdles, and the extracleithrum has a
180 dorsal position on the scapulocoracoid. In pup 1, the medial margins of the girdles rotate in a dorsal
181 direction, leading to the contact between their two anterior extremities, also observed in the following
182 stages, and the extracleithrum has a more lateral position on the scapulocoracoid (Fig. 4). In the
183 juvenile the cleithrum, extracleithrum and clavicle of the pectoral girdle move progressively in closer
184 contact to one another. In the adult stage, these three bones are in close contact with one another
185 with the edges of the bones overlapping. On the μ CT scan the three bones appear fused, yet this may
186 be due to the limited resolution of the scan. Indeed, the observation of isolated pectoral girdles shows
187 that the three bones are not fused and that each bone is independent.

188 • The anocleithrum (ano.)

189 It is the most dorsal bone of the pectoral girdle, closely located, but without contact, to the medial
190 side of the dorsal end of the cleithrum. It is a small flat and straight bone, oriented dorso-ventrally.
191 The anocleithrum is attached to the cleithrum by a ligament, as described previously by Millot &
192 Anthony (1958). The general morphology of this dermal bone changes dramatically during
193 development.

194 In the fetus, the anocleithrum is straight and proportionally smaller compared to other stages (Fig. 3).
195 In lateral view, it extends beyond the antero-dorsal margin of the dorsal end of the cleithrum. In pup
196 1, the anocleithrum is proportionally longer, and gently curved to follow the lateral body surface. It
197 also extends beyond the antero-dorsal margin of the dorsal end of the cleithrum. From pup 2 onwards,
198 it extends beyond both the antero-dorsal and postero-ventral margins of the dorsal end of the
199 cleithrum (Fig. 5).

200 The anocleithrum shows some individual variability and asymmetry. Pup 1 has a right anocleithrum
201 with a convex shape in anterior direction, whereas the left one is straight (Fig. 5 A). In pup 2, the left
202 anocleithrum is S-shaped whereas the right one is straighter (Fig. 5 B). The right anocleithrum of the
203 adult is bifid with a backward pointing process whereas the left one is straight (Fig. 5 D). This condition
204 was previously noticed by Millot & Anthony (1958) in another adult specimen (MNHN AC-2012-1 = CCC
205 3).

206 • The cleithrum (cl.)

207 In the adult, the cleithrum is an elongated bone fused with the extracleithrum and the clavicle, and
208 overlapping the dorsal surface of the scapulocoracoid (Fig. 2). The medial margin of the cleithrum
209 forms a gutter to accommodate the medial margin of the scapulocoracoid. The cleithrum contacts the
210 extracleithrum at its lateral edge, and in its posterior part forms a gutter surrounding the lateral margin
211 of the scapulocoracoid until the level of the articular process of the scapulocoracoid. The dorsal part
212 of the cleithrum surrounds the dorsal tip of the scapulocoracoid. The uppermost part of the cleithrum
213 is flattened latero-medially and flared dorso-ventrally, with a more or less pronounced longitudinal
214 ridge on the lateral side of the bone. In the fetus, the dorsal lamina of the cleithrum is dorso-medially
215 oriented. Its dorsal tip is pointed and its anterior margin slightly convex (Fig. 3). In later stages, the
216 dorsal tip is spatula-shaped and the anterior margin tends to be progressively more concave (Fig. 3).

217 • The extracleithrum (ecl.)

218 The extracleithrum has an elongated diamond shape and its lateral margin extends lower than the
219 lateral margin of the scapulocoracoid (Fig. 2). Its postero-medial edge contacts the cleithrum and its
220 antero-medial margin is overlapped by the clavicle. The scapulocoracoid fits in the gutter-shaped
221 internal side of the lateral margin of the extracleithrum (Fig. 2). In the fetus, the lateral margin of the
222 extracleithrum simply follows the lateral margin of the scapulocoracoid. The gutter-type contact
223 present in later stages is not formed yet.

224 The extracleithrum is separated from the clavicle by a gap that decreases during the development and
225 disappears from the juvenile onwards. In pup 1, the lateral margin of the extracleithrum extends
226 beyond the lateral margin of the scapulocoracoid and a long gutter appears on its internal side from
227 pup 2 onwards.

228 • The clavicle (cla.)

229 In the adult, the enlarged posterior part of the clavicle is positioned at the antero-lateral part of the
230 scapulocoracoid (Fig. 2). In cross-section, it appears that the posterior tip of the clavicle overlaps the
231 margins of the cleithrum and extracleithrum (Fig. 6). The medial and lateral margins of the clavicle
232 form two gutters where the lateral angle of the scapulocoracoid fits into, then extends antero-ventrally
233 as a twisted shank (Fig. 2). This shank is horizontal, medially concave and reaches the median plane of
234 the ventral side of the body. According to Millot & Anthony (1958), both twisted shanks articulate with
235 a narrow basal lamina, located at the mid-line, but this basal lamina cannot be observed in the imaging
236 data.

237 In the fetus, the medial and lateral margins of the clavicle do not form a gutter and the clavicle does
238 not totally surround the lateral angle of the scapulocoracoid (Fig. 6A). The posterior part of the clavicle
239 is only in contact with the extracleithrum. There is no contact between the anterior twisted shanks of
240 the right and the left clavicles. From pup 1 onwards, the clavicles are ventrally in contact and form with
241 the scapulocoracoid a hemi-circle and the posterior part of the clavicle partially overlaps the cleithrum
242 (Fig. 6 B-C). In this stage, the lateral margin of the clavicle extends ventrally and begins to form a gutter.
243 In pup 2 and the following stages, the lateral and medial margins of the clavicle form two small gutters
244 that surround the lateral angle of the scapulocoracoid. From pup 2 onwards, the posterior tip of the
245 clavicle overlaps both the margins of the cleithrum and extracleithrum.

246 • The scapulocoracoid (scc.)

247 This massive element is overlapped by the cleithrum, extracleithrum and clavicle (Fig. 2, Fig. 3). It is
248 the only endochondral bone of the pectoral girdle. It is composed of two parts: a long triangular-
249 shaped blade, with a dorsal tip and a ventral base, positioned on the internal side of the cleithrum,
250 and a short and massive articular process for the pectoral fin, posteriorly oriented. The anterior margin
251 of the triangular-shaped blade is concave. The lateral and dorsal angles of the scapulocoracoid are very
252 sharp and respectively surrounded by the the clavicle and the cleithrum (Fig. 2 A). The massive articular
253 process of the scapulocoracoid is posteriorly oriented along the body axis, and round in transverse
254 section. The end of this process is a flat quadrangular surface with a small articular head at the supero-
255 lateral angle. This articular head corresponds to the glenoid process and forms a ball-and-socket joint
256 (Miyake *et al.*, 2016), and articulates with the first endoskeletal element of the fin.

257 In the fetus, the dorsal angle of the scapulocoracoid is rounded and slightly curved towards its outer
258 side (Fig. 3). The dermal elements of the girdle do not lie directly on the triangular part of the
259 scapulocoracoid, but are separated by a large space (Fig. 6 A). The articular process presents four
260 concave faces in transverse section. From pup 1 onwards the dorsal angle is straight and sharp. The
261 dermal bones closely overlap the scapulocoracoid (Fig. 6). The articular process is more robust and
262 large, rounded in transverse section (Fig. 3).

263 *The pectoral fin* (Fig. 7)

264 The pectoral fin of *Latimeria* is composed of different elements: mesomeres on the metapterygial axis,
265 pre-axial elements (corresponding to the pre-axial radials and pre-axial accessory elements), and post-
266 axial elements (corresponding to the post-axial accessory elements and the distal radial) (Fig. 7).
267 According to Millot & Anthony (1958), the metapterygial axis of the fin consists of five axial elements,
268 named "*articles*" and numbered from proximal to distal. However, Ahlberg (1989) identified four
269 mesomeres and one distal radial element. There are four pre-axial radial elements (Millot & Anthony,

270 1958; Forey 1998), a variable number of pre-axial and post-axial accessory elements (Millot & Anthony,
271 1958) (Fig. 7). The fin rays insert on the pre- and post-axial accessory elements, on the fourth pre-axial
272 radial and on the distal radial (Fig. 7). According to Millot & Anthony (1958), the fifth axial element is
273 different in shape from the first to fourth ones, and the fin rays articulate at its distal edge, whereas
274 the previous axial elements do not articulate with the fin rays. In this regard, and following Forey
275 (1998), we here refer to four mesomeres on the metapterygial axis and one distal radial that belongs
276 to the post-axial elements. The term of “mesomeres” is used after Jarvik (1980) as the subcylindrical
277 radial segments of the principal axis in sarcopterygian fins.

278 According to Johanson *et al.* (2007), the three first axial elements are homologous to the humerus,
279 ulna and ulnare of tetrapodomorphs and tetrapods. Similarly, the two first pre-axial radial elements
280 are considered homologous to the radius and intermedium of tetrapods (Johanson *et al.*, 2007). The
281 reference position of the pectoral fin is with the fin positioned along the body, its leading edge oriented
282 dorsally. This position corresponds to the position of the pectoral fin of embryos within the oviduct
283 (Forey, 1998).

284 1) The metapterygial axis

285 The first and second mesomeres (Forey, 1998) have a similar quadrangular prismatic shape with
286 slightly concave faces, as described by Millot & Anthony (1958). The dorsal and ventral edges (“*bord*
287 “*supérieur*” and “*bord inférieur*” cfr. Millot & Anthony, 1958) of the first mesomere form both a ridge
288 directed from the proximal to the distal side. The dorsal ridge is well developed and extends further
289 than the distal end of the bone. The distal part of the ridge is directed to the medial plane (“*interne*”
290 for Millot & Anthony), when the fin is in resting position. The ventral ridge is also well developed and
291 has a hook (“*crochet*” for Millot & Anthony) directed towards the medial plane (Fig. 7, Supplementary
292 Fig. 1). The lateral and medial edge (“*externe*” and “*interne*” edge for Millot & Anthony, 1958) of the
293 mesomeres are angular but smooth and they do not form a ridge (Supplementary Fig. 1).

294 Each mesomere is longer than wide and presents a proximal joint (“*extrémité antérieure*” for Millot &
295 Anthony, 1958) that is concave and a distal joint convex (“*extrémité postérieure*” for Millot & Anthony,
296 1958).

- 297 • The first mesomere (mes. 1)

298 This mesomere has the same orientation in our virtual dissection as described by Millot & Anthony
299 (1958) and we can define the four facets: the dorso-medial, the dorso-lateral, the ventro-lateral and
300 ventro-medial (“*supéro-interne*”, “*supéro-externe*”, “*inféro-externe*” and “*inféro-interne*” for Millot &
301 Anthony, 1958) (Supplementary Fig. 1). It is the largest mesomere of the fin.

302 In the fetus, the transverse section of this mesomere shows four highly concave facets (Fig. 9 A). The
303 joint with the scapulocoracoid (called glenoid surface by Millot & Anthony, 1958) is also concave, and
304 located on the lateral side of the mesomere, extending proximally (Fig. 8, Fig. 9 C, D). The dorsal and
305 ventral ridges of the first mesomere are slightly oblique to the medial plane at the distal end of the
306 mesomere. These ridges begin at the level of the joint with the scapulocoracoid and end at the distal
307 part of the first mesomere. From pup 1 onwards, the first mesomere is fully formed and presents a
308 quadrangular prismatic shape. Its cross section shows that its facets are less concave than in fetus (Fig.
309 9 B). The articular surface with the head of the scapulocoracoid is highly concave. As in the following
310 stages, it is mainly located on the lateral side of the mesomere with only a lateral swollen margin
311 (Supplementary Fig. 1). From pup 1 to the adult, the morphology of the first mesomere does not
312 change (except in size). In these stages, we can observe an asymmetry between the right and left side.
313 The left mesomere has a double hook that forms the beginning of a loop (Fig. 9 E), whereas the right
314 mesomere has only a single hook (Fig. 9 F).

315 • The second mesomere (mes. 2)

316 This mesomere is smaller than the first one. As described by Millot & Anthony (1958), its proximal joint
317 is less concave than that of the first mesomere. Despite a similar morphology as the first mesomere,
318 its orientation is different and the bone shows a rotation around the fin axis (Supplementary Fig. 1).
319 The dorsolateral face of the mesomere 1 corresponds to the dorsal face of the mesomere 2, the
320 ventrolateral face corresponds to the lateral face, the ventromedial face to the ventral face and the
321 dorsomedial face to the medial face (Supplementary Fig. 1). The proximal joint of this mesomere is not
322 in lateral position as in the first mesomere, but it covers the proximal surface (Supplementary Fig. 1).
323 This joint surface is less deep compared to the first mesomere and a peripheral swollen edge surrounds
324 it, whereas the first mesomere has only a lateral swollen edge around the proximal joint
325 (Supplementary Fig. 1). In fetus, its morphology is similar to that of the first mesomere: longer than
326 wide, thin, and with highly concaves faces (Fig. 9 C, D). In this stage, it is not clear that there is a rotation
327 of the elements along the metapterygial axis. From pup 1 onwards, it is fully formed with a
328 quadrangular prismatic shape and concave faces. As for the first mesomere, the second mesomere
329 shows some asymmetry. In pup 2, the ventrolateral ridge of the right fin wears a double hook that
330 forms a loop (Fig. 9 G), whereas on the left fin, the second mesomere only has a single hook (Fig. 8,
331 Fig. 9 H).

332 • The third mesomere (mes. 3)

333 As for the second mesomere, this element shows a rotation around the axis of the fin. Here, the dorsal
334 face of the second mesomere corresponds to the dorsomedial face, the lateral face corresponds to the

335 dorsolateral face, the ventral face to the ventrolateral face and the medial face to the ventromedial
336 face. Therefore, the dorsal edge of the first mesomere corresponds to the medial edge of this
337 mesomere and the dorsolateral face of the first mesomere corresponds to the dorsomedial face. This
338 mesomere is more transversely flattened than the previous one. The dorsal and ventral ridges of the
339 first mesomere corresponds to the medial and lateral ridges. As for the previous mesomere, the ridges
340 are on the medial and lateral edge of the third mesomere (corresponding to the dorsal and ventral
341 edge of the first mesomere) separating the dorsomedial and ventromedial faces (and dorsolateral and
342 ventrolateral faces) of the mesomere. These two ridges, directed from the proximal to distal, present
343 the same shape. The proximal first third is oblique and slopes down to the ventral side. The distal two-
344 thirds slope slightly up until the distal extremity of the mesomere (Fig. 10 C-F). The lateral ridge does
345 not present a hook, unlike the ventral ridge of the first mesomere and the ventro-lateral ridge of the
346 second mesomere. The concave proximal joint is less deep than that of the previous mesomere. The
347 distal end of this mesomere is highly convex and articulates with the fourth mesomere and the third
348 pre-axial radial. In the fetus, its morphology is similar to previous mesomeres. From pup 1 onwards, it
349 is fully formed, and its morphology does not change until adult stage (Fig. 8, Fig. 10).

350 • The fourth mesomere (mes. 4)

351 It is the smallest mesomere of the fin. It has the same orientation as the third mesomere and it has the
352 same transverse flattening. Its ventral edge forms a large ridge whereas its dorsal edge is flat (Fig. 7,
353 Fig. 10). The lateral and medial edge of the fourth mesomere form a large bulge and there is a small
354 oblique ridge on the proximal part of the medial edge. This mesomere is surrounded by the third pre-
355 axial radial element at its dorsal edge and by the post-axial accessory elements at its ventral edge (Fig.
356 7, Fig. 10). In the fetus, as for the previous elements, the fourth mesomere is thin, with its faces highly
357 concave in transverse cross section. The ventral edge shows a small ridge, smaller than in the next
358 stages (Fig. 10 A, B). The dorsal edge of the fourth mesomere forms a massive ridge. The lateral and
359 medial edge of the mesomere form each a thin ridge directed from proximal to distal. The medial thin
360 ridge follows the proximo-distal midline along the medial face of mesomere and the lateral ridge is
361 located more ventrally on the fourth mesomere. From pup 1 onwards, it is fully formed and its
362 morphology does not change until the adult stage (Fig. 8, Fig. 10 C-F). The dorsal edge no longer has
363 its triangular shape and becomes flat. The lateral and medial ridges of the fetus now form a bulge
364 directed from proximal to distal and it is more difficult to distinguish the dorsolateral and ventrolateral
365 faces on the lateral side of the mesomere (and the dorsomedial and ventromedial faces from the
366 medial side of the mesomere) (Fig. 10 C-F).

367 2) The pre-axial elements

368 The pre-axial radial elements are located on the dorsal side of the fin (corresponding to the pre-axial
369 side of the fin/limb of most sarcopterygians; Forey, 1998), near to the joint between the mesomeres
370 of the fin. The first and second pre-axial radials have a different morphology from the third and fourth
371 pre-axial radials (Millot & Anthony, 1958). The two first pre-axial radials have an egg-like shape
372 whereas the others are thin and elongated.

373 • The first pre-axial radial (pr. rad. 1)

374 It is positioned at the distal part of the lateral edge of the first mesomere (pre-axial edge), near the
375 joint with the second mesomere. It is slightly shifted towards the dorsolateral face of the first
376 mesomere (Fig. 7, Fig. 8, Fig. 9). It is egg-shaped and slightly thinner on the proximal side. In the fetus,
377 this radial extends to the proximal part of the second mesomere and the distal part of the first
378 mesomere (Fig. 9 C, D), but from pup 1 onwards, it only covers the first mesomere (Fig. 9 E-H). The
379 right and left first pre-axial radials present a different shape. Whereas the right element already shows
380 its ovoid shape, the left element is thinner in transverse section and elongated and extends to the
381 second mesomere more broadly.

382 • The second pre-axial radial (pr. rad. 2)

383 It covers the distal part of the dorsolateral edge of the second mesomere, near the joint with the third
384 mesomere. As for the first pre-axial radial, it is slightly shifted towards the dorsal face of the second
385 mesomere and it is egg-shaped (Fig. 7, Fig. 8, Fig. 9). According to Millot & Anthony (1958), this element
386 is thinner and more elongated than the first pre-axial radial. However, our segmentation and the
387 different isolated pectoral fins of adult specimens (CCC 6; CCC 7; CCC 14; CCC 19) show a similar size
388 and shape of the two elements. In the fetus, this second pre-axial radial is elongated and thin in
389 transverse section and covers the proximal part of the third mesomere (Fig. 8, Fig. 9 C, D). From pup 1
390 onwards, the second pre-axial radial is less elongated and egg-shaped, and covers only the distal part
391 of the second mesomere (Fig. 8, Fig. 9 E-H).

392 • The third pre-axial radial (pr. rad. 3)

393 This radial differs from the previous radials in shape. It is thin and elongated, oval-shaped, and taller
394 than the fourth mesomere that it covers (Fig. 7). At its distal end, there is a small pointed element,
395 which is the tip of the third pre-axial radial. This element carries fin rays 25 to 28 (Fig. 7). The proximal
396 part of this element is straight and it articulates with the third mesomere. In the fetus, it could only be
397 segmented for the right fin. This element is closely associated with the fourth pre-axial radial and the
398 pre-axial accessory elements and is part of a large cartilaginous plate (Fig. 10 A, B). In pup 1, the
399 cartilaginous plate is segmented and the third pre-axial radial is differentiated from the fourth pre-

400 axial radial and the pre-axial accessory elements (Fig. 10). From pup 1 onwards, the third pre-axial
401 radial presents its elongated oval shape and has a small separated tip.

- 402 • The fourth pre-axial radial (pr. rad. 4)

403 This element is positioned at the distal end of the fin endoskeleton in association with the distal radial.
404 As for the third pre-axial radial, this element is elongated and thin, but it has a trapezoidal shape with
405 three straight edges and one curved edge (Fig. 7, Fig. 10). The ventral straight edge is in contact with
406 the distal radial and its dorsal edge is in contact with the third pre-axial radial and its tip. It articulates
407 with distal part of the fourth mesomere by its proximal straight edge (Fig. 10). Its distal edge is curved
408 and carries fin rays 20 to 24 (Fig. 7). In the fetus it appears that the third pre-axial radial and the fourth
409 pre-axial radial form a unique cartilaginous plate that covers at least the fourth mesomere and the
410 distal radial in the left fin (Fig. 10 A) and also the third mesomere in the right fin (Fig. 10 B). Between
411 the fetus stage and the pup 1 stage, this element becomes segmented into several elements: the third
412 pre-axial radial with its pre-axial accessory elements and its tip, and the fourth pre-axial radial
413 described just above (Fig. 8, Fig. 10). From pup 1 onwards, the fourth pre-axial radial presents its
414 trapezoidal shape (Fig. 10 C-F).

- 415 • Pre-axial accessory elements (pr. acc.)

416 These elements (called "*éléments accessoires de la troisième pièce radiale préaxiale*" by Millot &
417 Anthony, 1958) are positioned at the dorsal edge of the third mesomere and associated to the third
418 pre-axial radial. There is one large element in contact with the third mesomere, one large element in
419 contact with both the third mesomere and the previous element that carries the fin rays 31 and 32,
420 and one large element in contact with the third mesomere and the third pre-axial radial that carries
421 the fin rays 29 and 30 (Fig. 7). There are also several smaller elements, between two and four, in
422 contact with the larger elements or with the third pre-axial radial, but their number varies depending
423 on the development stage (Fig. 7, Fig. 8, Fig. 10). In the fetus, there are no differentiated pre-axial
424 accessory elements. These elements belong to the same large cartilaginous plate as the third pre-axial
425 radial and the fourth pre-axial radial (Fig. 10 A, B). From pup 1 onwards, the cartilaginous plate
426 becomes segmented in several elements and the pre-axial accessory elements are differentiated from
427 the third pre-axial radial and the fourth pre-axial radial (Fig. 10). It seems that the number of pre-axial
428 accessory elements is not fixed and can differ between the right and left fins within an individual (Fig.
429 7). In pup 1, there are six elements on the right fin with three small elements, whereas there are seven
430 elements on the left fin with four small elements. In pup 2, there is the same organization with three
431 small pre-axial accessory elements of the right fin, but only two small elements on the left fin
432 (associated with the three large elements). In the adult, Millot & Anthony (1958) described seven

433 elements on the pre-axial accessory elements, three large elements and four small elements. Our 3D
434 segmentation shows only one large cartilaginous element identified by μ CT, but the different isolated
435 pectoral fin skeletons show seven elements, as described by Millot & Anthony (1958).

436 3) The post-axial elements

437 • The distal radial (dis. rad.) (Fig. 7)

438 As described by Millot & Anthony (1958), this element is transversely flattened and it has an elongated
439 trapezoid shape. Its shape is similar to the fourth pre-axial radial and it is its symmetric, but slightly
440 taller (Fig. 7, Fig. 10). It has three straight edges and one curved convex edge. In transverse section the
441 distal radial present two slightly convex faces (Supplementary Fig. 2). Its dorsal straight edge is aligned
442 with the proximo-distal axis of the fourth mesomere and it is close to the fourth pre-axial radial
443 element. The proximal joint is straight. Its ventral edge is straight and in contact with the distal post-
444 axial accessory element. The curved edge is positioned at the distal part of the ventral edge of this
445 element. It is on this edge that the fin rays 11 to 19 are inserted (Fig. 7). In the fetus, the distal radial
446 already presents a shape similar to that observed in the adult. It is transversely flattened, but presents
447 a lateral ridge directed from proximal to distal (Fig. 10 A, B). In pup 1, there is no lateral ridge on this
448 element (Fig. 10 C, D). From pup 2 onwards, there is a small swelling on its dorsal edge. This swelling
449 is triangular shaped, as wide as its edge on the proximal part, then decreasing in size (Fig. 10 E, F).

450 • The post-axial accessory elements (po. acc.)

451 According to Millot & Anthony (1958), there are five post-axial accessory elements in the adult stage.
452 However, in the different isolated pectoral fins of adult specimens observed (CCC 6; CCC 7; CCC 14;
453 CCC 19), we can see only four elements, aligned along the ventral ridge of the fourth mesomere. The
454 proximal and the distal post-axial accessory elements are the largest ones and have a similar shape.
455 The proximal element articulates with the proximal part of the ventral edge of the fourth mesomere.
456 It is triangular-shaped with the tip directed to the proximal side of the fin and leaves a large gap
457 between this element and the third mesomere (Fig. 7, Fig. 8. Fig. 10). The second and third post-axial
458 accessory elements are small and globular. The distal element is similar to the first element. This
459 element is in contact with the distal part of the ventral edge of the fourth mesomere and the ventral
460 edge of the distal radial. The first ten fin rays insert on the ventral edge of these post-axial accessory
461 elements: 1 to 5 on the first element, ray 6 on the second element, ray 7 on the third, and rays 8 to 10
462 on the fourth element (Fig. 7). In the fetus, there is only one large post-axial accessory element
463 identified in the μ CT (Fig. 10 B). This element is in contact with the fourth mesomere and the proximal
464 part of the ventral edge of the distal radial. It appears segmented at pup 1 and pup 2, as for the pre-
465 axial cartilaginous plate. In pup 1, we can observe an asymmetry between the right and left fin for

466 these elements. In the right fin, the elements are as described above, but in the left fin, the third
467 element is slightly different, being flat and trapezoidal-shaped (Fig. 10 C). In pup 2, there is no
468 asymmetry between the right and left pectoral fins for these elements. In the juvenile and adult, the
469 μ CT data do not allow us to identify more than one small element (Fig. 8).

470 4) The fin rays

471 There are 32 fin rays on the pectoral fin. There are numbered 1 to 32 from the ventral side to the dorsal
472 side (Fig. 7). As described by Millot & Anthony (1958) the proximal part of the fin ray is bifurcated, and
473 one branch inserts on the lateral side of the fin and the other on the medial side. The first ray is very
474 small and the next becomes longer until ray 20 after which the length of the fin rays decreases. The
475 fins rays of the pre-axial side of the fin insert largely on the pre-axial radials elements: rays 29 to 32
476 insert on the pre-axial accessory elements, rays 25 to 28 insert on the third pre-axial radial, and rays
477 20 to 24 insert on the curved edge of the fourth pre-axial radial. On the post-axial side of the fin, the
478 fin rays insert only on the edge of the elements: the fin rays 11 to 19 on the curved edge of the distal
479 radial and rays 1 to 10 on the edge of the post-axial accessory elements. In the fetus, the fin web is
480 rounded and there seems to be no clear leading edge. From pup 1 onwards, the fin web has the same
481 morphology as in the adult, forming a fin web that is elongated and pointed, with a convex leading
482 edge and a concave trailing edge.

483 **Discussion**

484 As the period of gestation remain unknown in the extant coelacanths, it was consequently not possible
485 to establish precise relationships between the known ontogenetic stages in vertebrates and those
486 described here for *Latimeria*. We have gathered five clearly different ontogenetic stages: three
487 prenatal stages, one juvenile and one adult.

488 *The pectoral girdle*

489 The pectoral girdle shows different arrangements within the different vertebrate groups, with various
490 types of relations between the dermal and endoskeletal elements in relation to the mode of
491 locomotion (McGonnell, 2001). The dermal anocleithrum (in sarcopterygians) or postcleithrum (in
492 actinopterygians), cleithrum and clavicle are primitively present in all osteichthyans (Gosline, 1977;
493 Friedman & Brazeau, 2010; Zhu *et al.*, 2012a). The majority of osteichthyans also has a supracleithrum
494 and/or a post-temporal, both small elements located in the most dorsal part of the girdle as in early
495 tetrapodomorphs (Coates & Ruta, 2007; Friedman & Brazeau, 2010). Coelacanths have the
496 anocleithrum, cleithrum and clavicle in common with the other osteichthyans, but also a
497 supernumerary dermal bone, the extracleithrum, which is considered as a synapomorphy of the group

498 (Forey, 1998). The endoskeletal element of the pectoral girdle, the scapulocoracoid, is present in all
499 vertebrates and is covered by the cleithrum and clavicle in osteichthyans (McGonnell, 2001). In
500 osteichthyan fishes, the scapulocoracoid is usually small compared to other elements of the pectoral
501 girdle and the cleithrum forms a large part of the girdle (Janvier, 1996; McGonnell, 2001; Zhu &
502 Schultze, 2001). However, in *Latimeria chalumnae* the scapulocoracoid is proportionally massive (Figs.
503 3, 5) and is, together with the cleithrum, the largest element of the girdle. A large scapulocoracoid is
504 also present in the lungfish *Neoceratodus forsteri* (Rosen *et al.*, 1981; Johanson *et al.*, 2004) and
505 considered convergent with coelacanths by Coates and Ruta (2007). Within tetrapodomorphs, there is
506 an evolutionary trend towards a reduction of the dermal part of the girdle (clavicle, cleithrum) while
507 the endochondral scapulocoracoid becomes the main component of the girdle in tetrapods
508 (McGonnell, 2001; Vickaryous & Hall, 2006). The presence of a large scapulocoracoid or scapula +
509 coracoid in tetrapods and in the coelacanth *Latimeria* is also considered convergent. Indeed, early
510 tetrapodomorphs as *Eusthenopteron* (Andrews & Westoll, 1970) have proportionally small
511 scapulocoracoids, as for extinct coelacanths as observed in the Triassic coelacanth *Laugia groenlandica*
512 (Stensiö, 1932; Millot & Anthony, 1958) and the Devonian coelacanth *Diplocercides* (Stensiö, 1922).
513 However, it is necessary to be careful with this assumption. Indeed, unlike the dermal elements of the
514 girdle, the coelacanth scapulocoracoid is largely cartilaginous and it is consequently possible that only
515 the most ossified part of this element is preserved in fossils (Forey, 1998). According to Forey (1981),
516 the scapulocoracoid of the Carboniferous coelacanth *Rhabdoderma* was probably more substantial
517 than the preserved mineralized portion, and fit into the groove present in the internal face of the
518 cleithrum as observed in *Latimeria*. If this assumption is correct, the presence of groove on the internal
519 side of dermal bones of the girdle in fossil coelacanths, as in *Diplurus* (Schaeffer, 1952), *Rhabdoderma*
520 (Forey, 1981) or *Trachymetopon* (Dutel *et al.*, 2015), delimit the lateral expansion of the
521 scapulocoracoid.

522 In most osteichthyans the pectoral girdle is formed early in development before the fins or limbs. The
523 cleithrum and clavicle are dermal bones and are known to be the first to appear, the scapulocoracoid
524 appearing later in the development of actinopterygians (Jollie, 1980; Faustino & Power, 1999;
525 Koumoundouros *et al.*, 2001) and of the lungfish *Neoceratodus* (Johanson *et al.*, 2004; Joss & Johanson,
526 2007). In *Latimeria chalumnae*, our observations suggest a similar development since all the elements
527 of the pectoral girdle are present in the fetus. Yet the scapulocoracoid seems deflated and is not in
528 tight contact with the dermal bones (Figs. 3, Fig. 6). Later in development an expected radially outward
529 growth of the scapulocoracoid leads to the close overlapping of the scapulocoracoid by the cleithrum,
530 the extracleithrum and the clavicle, as observed from pup 1 onwards (Fig. 6). These observations let
531 us assume that the scapulocoracoid is formed later in the development than the dermal bones in

532 *Latimeria* as in most vertebrates. The scapulocoracoid consists of a single massive element (Millot &
533 Anthony, 1958) in the early development of the pectoral girdle. This development of the
534 scapulocoracoid of *Latimeria* agrees with Schaeffer's (1941) observation of a complete co-ossification
535 of the scapular and coracoid elements of the girdle for *Undina* and *Macropoma*. However, the
536 development of the endoskeletal bone of the pectoral girdle is different from the actinopterygians.
537 Indeed, in actinopterygians (except for acipenseriforms (Jollie, 1980; Davis *et al.*, 2004)), there are two
538 ossification regions inside the cartilaginous scapulocoracoid plate that correspond to the scapular and
539 coracoid regions of the girdle (Patterson, 1982; Cubbage & Mabee, 1996; Grandel & Schulte-Merker,
540 1998). In *Neoceratodus*, as for *Latimeria*, there are no distinct ossification centers for the scapular and
541 coracoid regions inside the scapulocoracoid. However, unlike the coelacanth, these two regions are
542 distinct in the adult lungfish and are not co-ossified (Johanson *et al.*, 2004).

543 The anocleithrum is the element of the girdle that proportionally grows the most during development
544 despite remaining the smallest bone of the girdle at the adult stage (Fig. 3). The small and rod-like
545 anocleithrum in *Latimeria* is different in size and proportion from anocleithra known in other
546 sarcopterygian fishes such as *Neoceratodus* or tetrapodomorph fishes (Coates & Ruta, 2007). The
547 anocleithrum of *Latimeria* provides an insertion for the large *levator externus 5* muscle of the branchial
548 arches musculature (Millot & Anthony, 1958; Forey, 1998; Carvalho *et al.*, 2013), likely similar to
549 *Neoceratodus* (Carvalho *et al.*, 2013). However, the homology between the anocleithrum bones of
550 different sarcopterygians has been previously challenged (Campbell *et al.*, 2006) and remains to be
551 validated.

552 In the early stages of development there is a reorientation of the pectoral girdle inside the body. The
553 reorientation of bones during development has been shown in several groups of vertebrates. It is well
554 documented for the pelvic girdle in lissamphibians (Rocková & Rocek, 2005; Pomikal *et al.*, 2011;
555 Manzano *et al.*, 2013), the chicken (Nowlan & Sharpe, 2014) and in mice (Pomikal & Streicher, 2010),
556 and for the pectoral girdle in chelonians (Nagashima *et al.*, 2007). However, the mechanisms of
557 rotation and reorientation of the girdles remain largely unknown. As for the reorientation of the digits
558 during the development in some birds (Botelho *et al.*, 2014), the reorientation of the pectoral girdle in
559 *Latimeria* is probably tightly linked to its interactions with the development of the adjacent muscles.

560 *The pectoral fin*

561 The endoskeletal elements of the pectoral fin known in adult stage are already present in the fetus,
562 except the pre-axial accessory elements and the pre-axial radial elements 3 and 4. The axial elements
563 of the pectoral fin, like the scapulocoracoid, seem deflated in the fetus, and their development
564 between the fetus and pup 1 suggests a significant process of radially outward growth (Fig. 8). The

565 large distal cartilaginous plate in the fetus corresponds to the most distal radial elements (pre-axial
566 radial 3 and 4, pre-axial accessory elements) in pup 1. The post-axial accessory elements show a similar
567 development with the post-axial cartilaginous plate in the fetus corresponding to four post-axial
568 accessory elements in pup 1 (Fig. 8). Millot & Anthony (1958) already proposed the fragmentation of
569 a unique cartilaginous plate to form the radial elements. Observations made on the earliest stage
570 confirm the presence of non-differentiated large plates and support this hypothesis. Moreover, in the
571 fetus, the cartilaginous plate articulates with the third and fourth mesomeres and the distal radial,
572 suggesting a positional homology to the pre-axial accessory elements and the pre-axial radial 3 and 4,
573 since these elements are respectively articulated with the third and fourth mesomeres and the distal
574 radial in the later stages of development (Fig. 8; Fig. 10).

575 This splitting of a single endochondral plate to form the elements of the fin is also known in some other
576 groups of vertebrates. This mechanism has been observed in actinopterygians such as *Polyodon* (Davis
577 *et al.*, 2004; Mabee & Noordsy, 2004), the zebrafish *Danio rerio*, the bichir *Polypterus senegalus*
578 (Grandel & Schulte-Merker, 1998), the sturgeon *Acipenser* (Davis *et al.*, 2004). The splitting of the
579 endoskeleton of the fin is made by a decomposition of the extracellular matrix of the endoskeletal
580 plate leading to the formation of the proximal radials (pro- and mesopterygium) (Davis *et al.*, 2004;
581 Nakamura *et al.*, 2016). The primitive condition of the pectoral fin of sarcopterygians is thought to be
582 polybasal with pro-, meso- and metapterygium, as in actinopterygians (Zhu & Yu, 2009). However,
583 crown sarcopterygians, including coelacanth, have lost their pro- and mesopterygium and only retain
584 the metapterygium leading to the mono-basal condition of the fin (Rosen *et al.*, 1981; Janvier, 1996;
585 Zhu & Yu, 2009). In the acipenseriforms *Acipenser* and *Polyodon*, the metapterygial elements are
586 formed outside the endoskeletal plate as an extension of the scapulocoracoid (Davis *et al.*, 2004;
587 Mabee & Noordsy, 2004). These elements are formed in a similar way as are the distal radials of the
588 fins of non-tetrapod sarcopterygians and the limbs in tetrapods (Davis *et al.*, 2004), with a
589 condensation of the mesenchyme from proximal to distal (Shubin & Alberch, 1986; Joss & Longhurst,
590 2001).

591 The development of the metapterygial axis in *Latimeria* might result from a process of segmentation
592 as known in other sarcopterygians and in *Polyodon*. However, this process occurs in the earliest stages
593 of the development of the fin or limb, and only for the formation of the different cartilaginous
594 elements of the endoskeletal axis before the ossification of these elements (Shubin & Alberch, 1986;
595 Joss & Longhurst, 2001; Cohn *et al.*, 2002). Due to the reduced ontogenetic series used in this study
596 we cannot confirm a segmentation process since the elements are already formed and only a growth
597 of the separated endoskeletal elements can be observed. For coelacanth, it is then not possible to
598 identify the mechanism involved in the formation of the metapterygial axis or in the splitting of the

599 cartilaginous plate into pre-axial radial elements or post-axial accessory elements. The splitting of the
600 two pre-axial and post-axial cartilaginous plates to form, respectively, the third and fourth pre-axial
601 radials and the pre-axial accessory elements, and the post-axial accessory elements, seems, however,
602 to be different from the decomposition process of the extracellular matrix of the endoskeletal disc to
603 form the radial elements as known in actinopterygians. Indeed, in actinopterygians, it is the
604 precartilaginous plate that splits during development and that forms the different radial elements.
605 However, this splitting occurs before the condensation of the precartilaginous plate (Grandel &
606 Schulte-Merker, 1998; Davis *et al.*, 2004). In *Latimeria*, it appears that the cartilaginous plate is already
607 condensed in the fetus. This is clearly visible on the μ CT data and the different elements of the fins
608 have the same contrast than that of other endochondral bones of the body.

609 *Evolution of the pectoral fin morphology in coelacanth and tetrapodomorph fishes*

610 The radials elements of the pectoral fin are asymmetrically organized around the metapterygial axis.
611 Indeed, each mesomere of the fin is associated with a pre-axial element (radial and/or accessory),
612 whereas only the fourth mesomere is associated with radial elements on its post-axial region (distal
613 radial and accessory elements; Fig. 7). However, the general shape of the first and second pre-axial
614 radials, small and rounded, is clearly different from that of the more distal radials which are longer and
615 flattened (Fig. 7), as previously reported (Millot & Anthony, 1958). This difference in shape between
616 the pre-axial radial elements gives lobe-shaped morphology to the pectoral fin of *Latimeria* compared
617 to the fan-shaped fin morphology known in tetrapodomorph fishes. By contrast, the dermal fin rays
618 are arranged almost symmetrically around the main axis of the pectoral fin and they do not insert on
619 the pre-axial radial 1 and 2 (Fig. 7). The asymmetrical condition of the pectoral fin is more pronounced
620 in the early stage of the development. In the fetus, the first and second pre-axial radials, extending on
621 the next mesomere, are proportionally longer than in the following stages (Fig. 8, Fig. 9 C-D), where
622 these elements are small and only associated with one mesomere (Fig. 7, Fig. 8, Fig. 10 E-H). The
623 proportional reduction of the size of the proximal pre-axial radials with respect to the rest of
624 endochondral elements gives a more lobe-shaped aspect to the fin. Developmental data seem
625 corroborate the scenario of an evolution of the pectoral fin towards a lobe-shaped morphology based
626 on rare fossil coelacanth specimens. Indeed, the species *Shoshonia arcopteryx* (Friedman *et al.*, 2007)
627 from the Devonian of the United States, has elongated and flattened radials on the pre-axial side of
628 the fin. The most proximal pre-axial radials are elongated in *Shoshonia* and are different from the short
629 and rounded first and second pre-axial radials in adult *Latimeria*, providing a more fan-shaped
630 morphology to the fin. Interestingly, the earliest stage of *Latimeria* also presents elongated proximal
631 pre-axial radials. As seen in *Latimeria* since the fetus stage, only the distal mesomere is associated with
632 a post-axial radial. The fin rays of *Shoshonia* are associated with all the pre-axial radials, which gives

633 the fin a more asymmetrical profile of the fin web (Friedman *et al.*, 2007). This asymmetrical
634 disposition of the fin rays is also observed in other fossil coelacanths (Forey, 1998; Friedman *et al.*,
635 2007) including *Laugia groenlandica* (Stensiö, 1932) from the Triassic of Greenland. The condition
636 observed in these fossils is thus different from the near-symmetrical arrangement of the fin rays in
637 *Latimeria*. An asymmetrical arrangement of the radial elements and fin rays along the metapterygial
638 axis is also observed in tetrapodomorph fishes (Andrews & Westoll, 1970; Shubin *et al.*, 2006; Friedman
639 *et al.*, 2007), whereas in dipnomorph fishes the pectoral fin is very symmetrical (Ahlberg, 1989;
640 Friedman *et al.*, 2007). The fin rays usually insert on the pre- and post-axial radial elements, except in
641 osteolepiforms where they also insert on the post-axial process of the mesomeres (Friedman *et al.*,
642 2007). According to several authors it is possible that the post-axial process and the post-axial radials
643 have a same ontogenetic origin which could explain the insertion of the fin rays on the mesomere
644 (Jarvik, 1980; Friedman *et al.*, 2007).

645 In contrast, the endochondral elements in the pectoral fin of dipnomorphs are nearly symmetrical with
646 an arrangement of pre-axial and post-axial radials all along the metapterygial axis (Ahlberg, 1989;
647 Friedman *et al.*, 2007; Jude *et al.*, 2014). Yet, the condition observed in lungfish appears to be highly
648 derived with respect to the ancestral condition of sarcopterygian. The presence of an internally and
649 externally asymmetrical pectoral fin in coelacanths and other lobe-finned fishes suggests that this
650 condition is ancestral for sarcopterygians, as firstly proposed by Ahlberg (1989). This interpretation is
651 supported by our observations made on the development of *Latimeria*. The particular morphology of
652 the pectoral fin in *Latimeria* might be linked to changes in the mobility of the fin and in the locomotion,
653 but this hypothesis remains to be tested.

654 **Conclusion**

655 The bony elements of the girdle and pectoral fin of the extant coelacanth *Latimeria* are nearly fully
656 developed in the earliest stage of the ontogenetic series described here. During the first steps of
657 pectoral fin development there is a re-orientation of the girdle putting the scapulocoracoids and the
658 clavicles in the ventro-medial region of the two girdles in contact. The anocleithrum is the dermal bone
659 of the girdle that proportionally grows the most during the development, further showing considerable
660 morphological plasticity. The scapulocoracoid is robust which is unusual in most osteichthyans with
661 the exception of tetrapods. The earliest developmental stage specimen shows a deflated
662 scapulocoracoid and a lack of contact between the mesomeres and the scapulocoracoid with the
663 dermal bones of the girdle. This early stage specimen also presents two large cartilaginous plates, on
664 pre-axial and post-axial sides of the fin that later split into the pre-axial accessory elements and the
665 third and fourth pre-axial radial, and in the post-axial accessory elements. The internal shape of the

666 pectoral fin further becomes progressively more lobe-shaped due to a proportional reduction of the
667 proximal pre-axial radials during development. Our developmental data corroborate previous fossil
668 evidence, and reinforce the hypothesis that the lobe-shaped pectoral fin in the living coelacanth
669 derives from the primitive fan-shaped condition of sarcopterygians.

670 **Abbreviations**

671 ano., anocleithrum; cl., cleithrum; cla., clavicle; dis. rad., distal radial; ecl., extracleithrum; f. r., fin ray;
672 mes., mesomere; po. acc., post-axial accessory elements; pr. acc., pre-axial accessory elements; pr.
673 rad., pre-axial radial; scc., scapulocoracoid

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684 **Data Availability Statement**

685 All the data are available by request from the authors.

686 **Author contributions**

687 R.M, G.C and M.H designed the project. H.D and P.T performed the synchrotron scans. M.D.S made
688 the magnetic resonance imaging acquisitions. H.D, G.C and M.H made the conventional
689 microtomographical acquisitions with the assistance of local staff. R.M segmented the scans and made
690 the three-dimensional rendering of all of the developmental stages. R.M, G.C, A.H and M.H interpreted
691 the results. R.M wrote the manuscript. G.C, A.H, H.D, P.T and M.H revised the manuscript.

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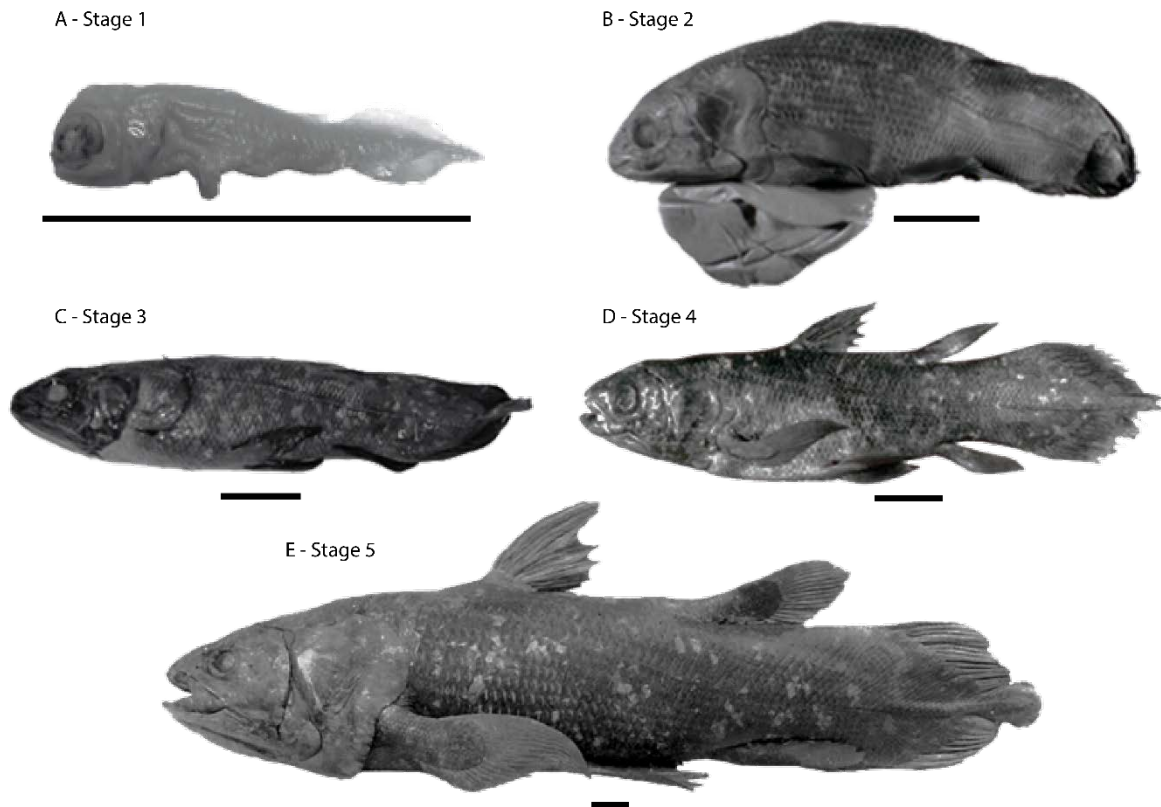


Figure 1: *Latimeria chalumnae* - Ontogenetic series in left lateral view. A: Fetus (CCC 202.1), B: First pup (CCC 29.5), C: Second pup (CCC 162.21), D: Juvenile (CCC 94), E: Adult (CCC 22). Scale bar= 5 cm.

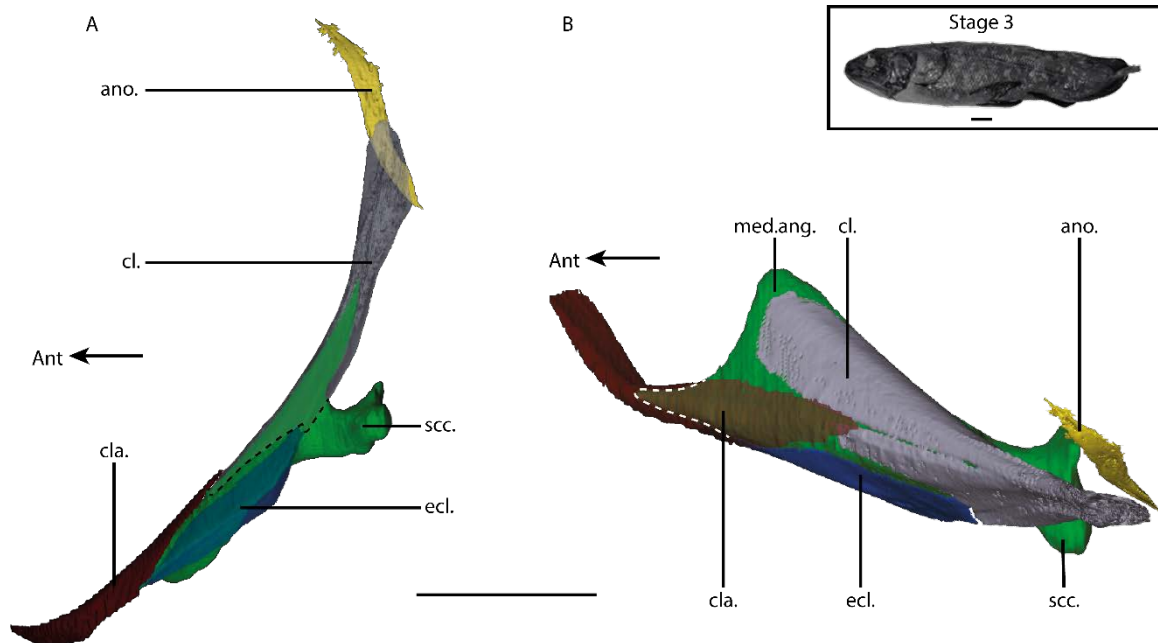


Figure 2: *Latimeria chalumnae* – Second pup. Left pectoral girdle in lateral (A) and dorsal (B) view. The cleithrum and extracleithrum are transparent in (A) to reveal the general shape of the scapulocoracoid; the clavicle is transparent in (B) to reveal the lateral angle of the scapulocoracoid. The dotted line shows the edge of the cleithrum in (A) and the edge of the scapulocoracoid in (B). ano. = anocleithrum; cl. = cleithrum; cla. = clavicle; ecl. = extracleithrum; lat.ang. = lateral angle of the scapulocoracoid; med.ang. = medial angle of the scapulocoracoid; scc. = scapulocoracoid. Scale bar = 20 mm.

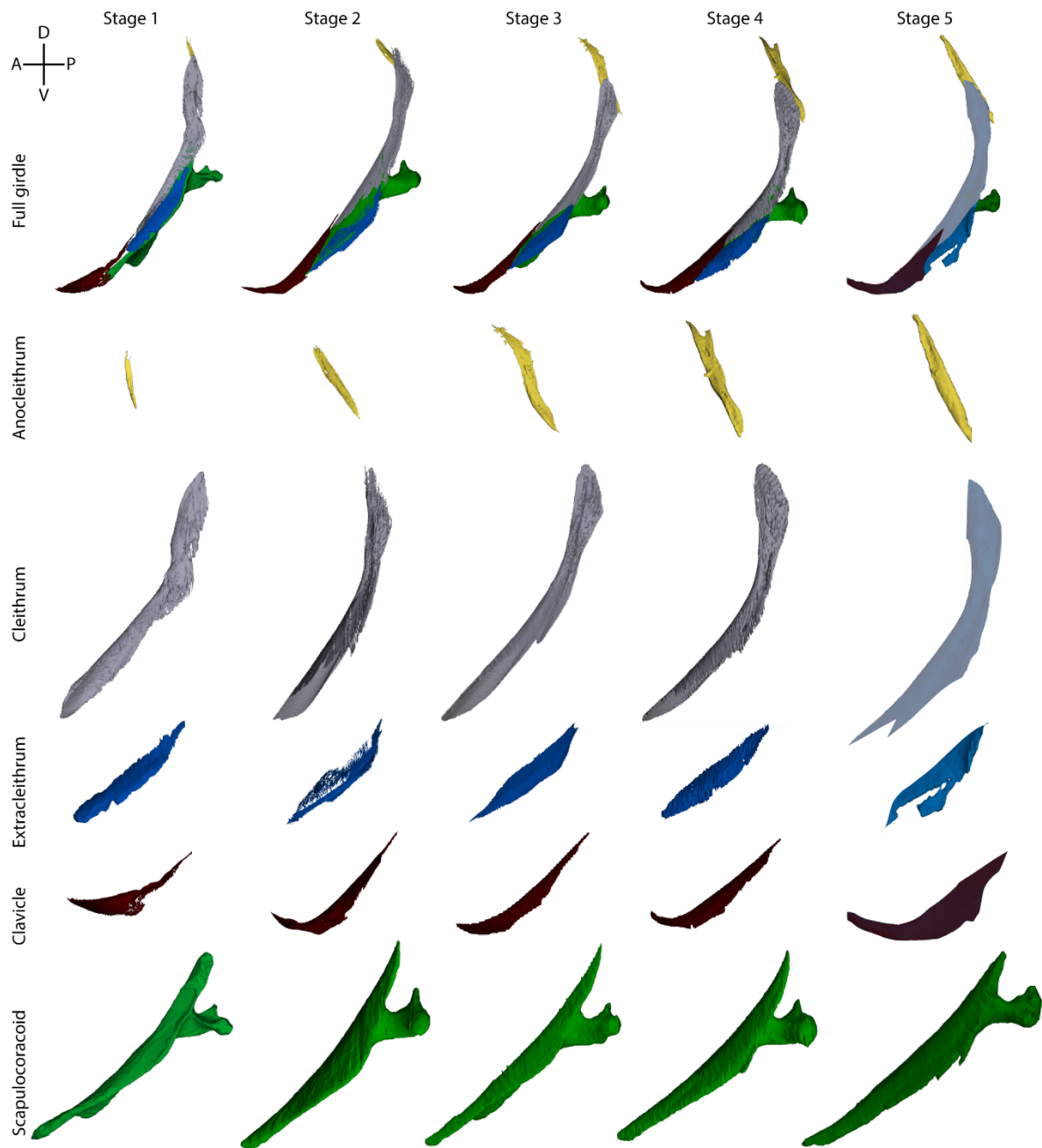


Figure 3: *Latimeria chalumnae*. Elements of the left pectoral girdle in lateral view at 5 different developmental stages (1 to 5). The different stages are not to scale, but the different bones within a given stage are to scale.

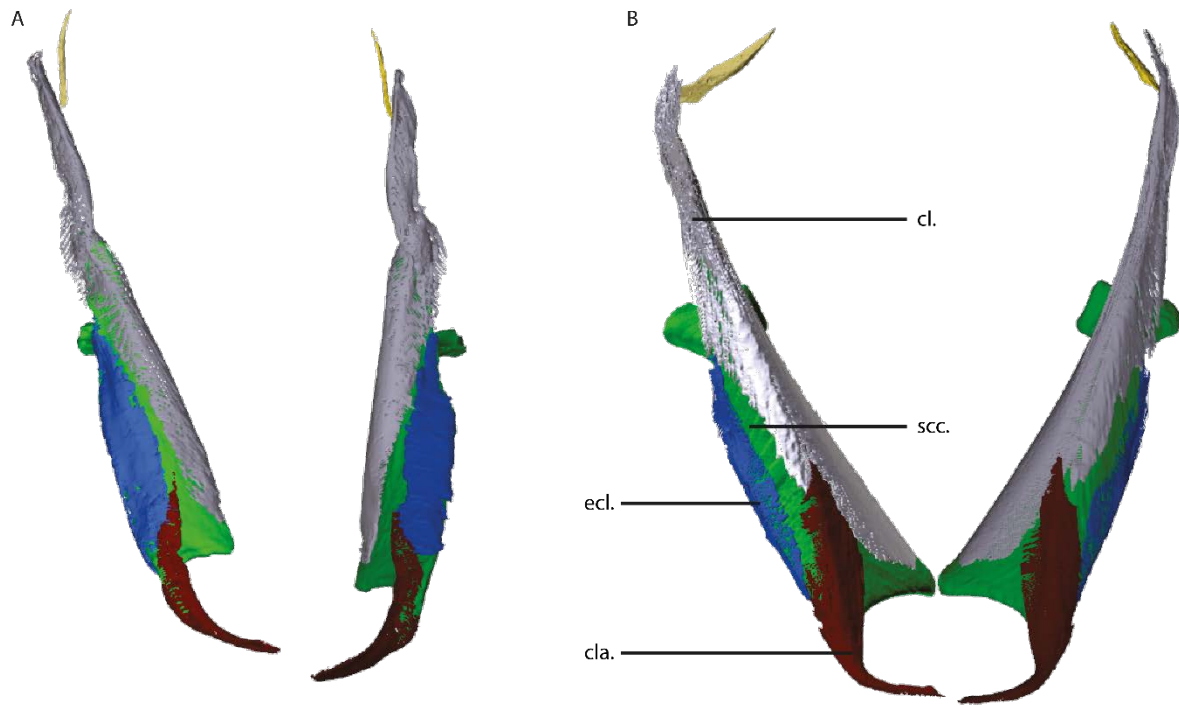


Figure 4: *Latimeria chalumnae* – The fetus and the first pup. Anterior views of the pectoral girdles of the fetus (A) and first pup (B) illustrating the reorientation of the pectoral girdles during the development of the coelacanth. cl. = cleithrum; cla. = clavicle; ecl. = extracleithrum; scc. = scapulocoracoid. Not to scale.

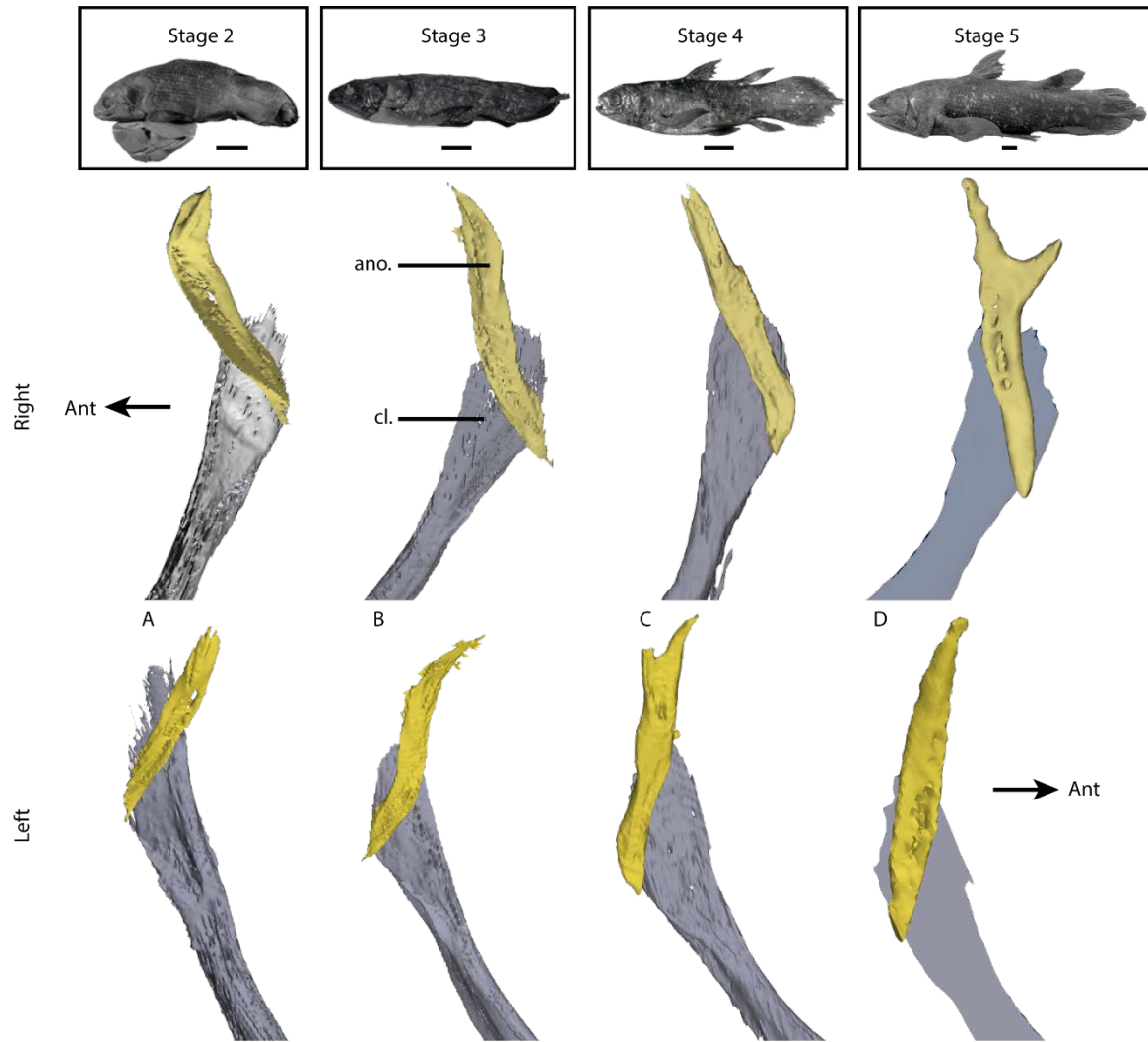


Figure 5: *Latimeria chalumnae* – Stage 2-5. Right anocleithrum (top) and left anocleithrum (bottom) in medial view. Note the intraspecific asymmetry and the individual asymmetry of the anocleithrum. ano. = anocleithrum; cl. = cleithrum. Scale bar = 5 cm. 3D models are not to scale.

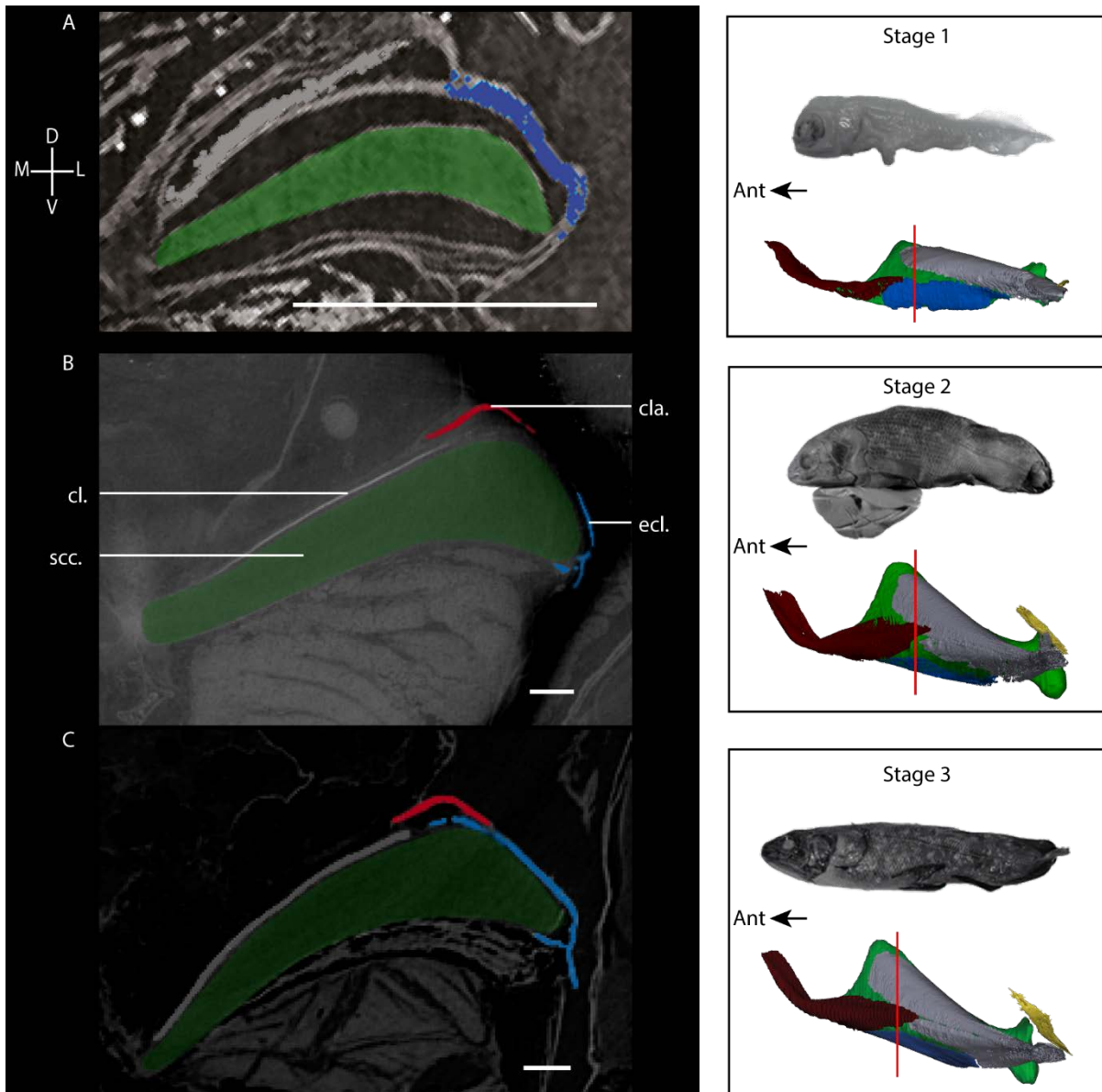


Figure 6: Latimeria chalumnae – The fetus (A), the first (B) and second (C) pup. Left pectoral girdle in transverse section. The location of the transverse sections are shown by a red line on the dorsal view of the 3D models of the pectoral girdles. In the fetus, the anterior part of the clavicle is not well developed and partially overlaps the posterior part of the cleithrum (not visible in the transverse section). In the first pup, the anterior part of the clavicle partially overlaps the cleithrum, but not the extracleithrum, whereas from the second pup onwards the anterior part of the clavicle partially covers both the cleithrum and the extracleithrum. cl. = cleithrum; cla. = clavicle; ecl. = extracleithrum; scc. = scapulocoracoid. D = dorsal; L = lateral; V = ventral; M = medial. Specimens and 3D models are not at scale. Scale bar = 1 mm.

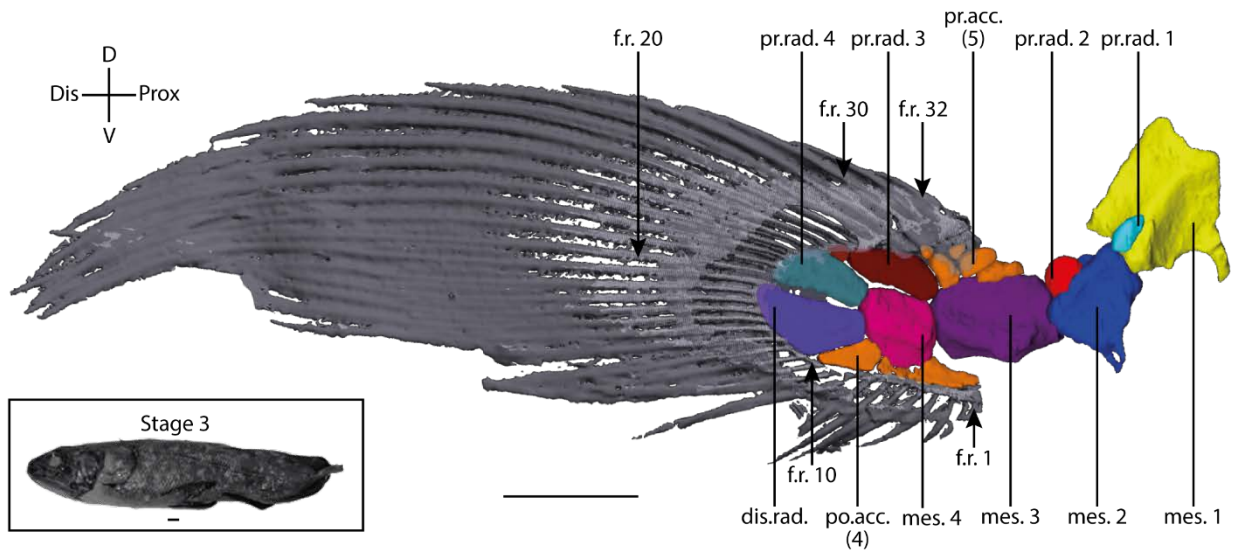


Figure 7: *Latimeria chalumnae* – Second pup. Right pectoral fin in lateral view. f.r. = fin ray; dis.rad. = distal radial; mes. = mesomere; po. acc. = post-axial accessory elements; pr. acc. = pre-axial accessory elements; pr. rad. = pre-axial radial. Scale bar = 10 mm.

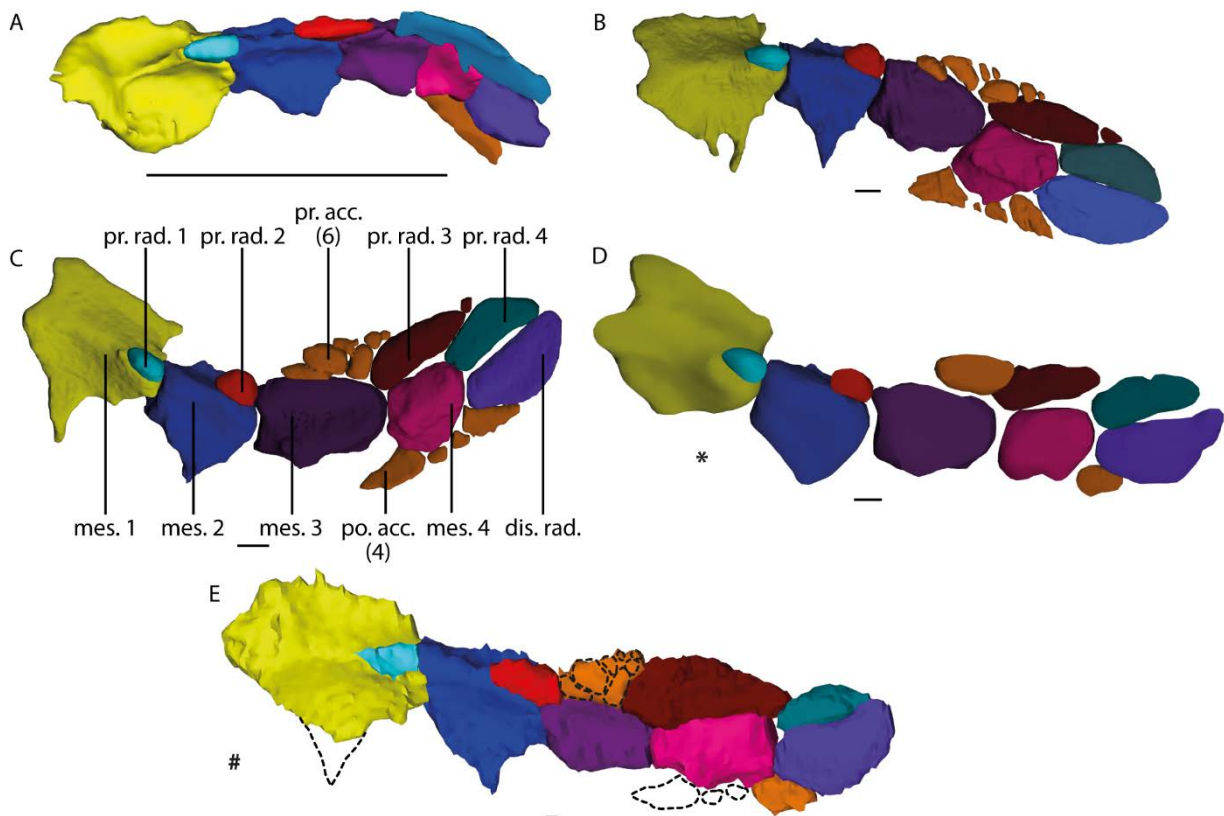


Figure 8: *Latimeria chalumnae*. Pectoral fin of five different developmental stages in left lateral view (B, C, D) and right lateral view (mirrored, A, E). A: the fetus, B: the first pup, C: the second pup, D: the juvenile, E: the adult. *: The juvenile was scanned with MRI at low resolution preventing the segmentation of the smallest elements. #: The adult was scanned using a regular CT-scan and the resolution of the data did not allow the segmentation of some elements. Corresponding elements of the fin have been indicated in the same color. The dotted line represents the pre-axial accessory elements, post-axial accessory elements and the hook on the mes. 1 of the stage 5 not segmented but known to exist based on prepared pectoral fins.

dis.rad. = distal radial; mes. = mesomere; po. acc. = post-axial accessory elements; pr. acc. = pre-axial accessory elements; pr. rad. = pre-axial radial. Scale bar = 2 mm (A), scale bar = 10 mm (B-E).

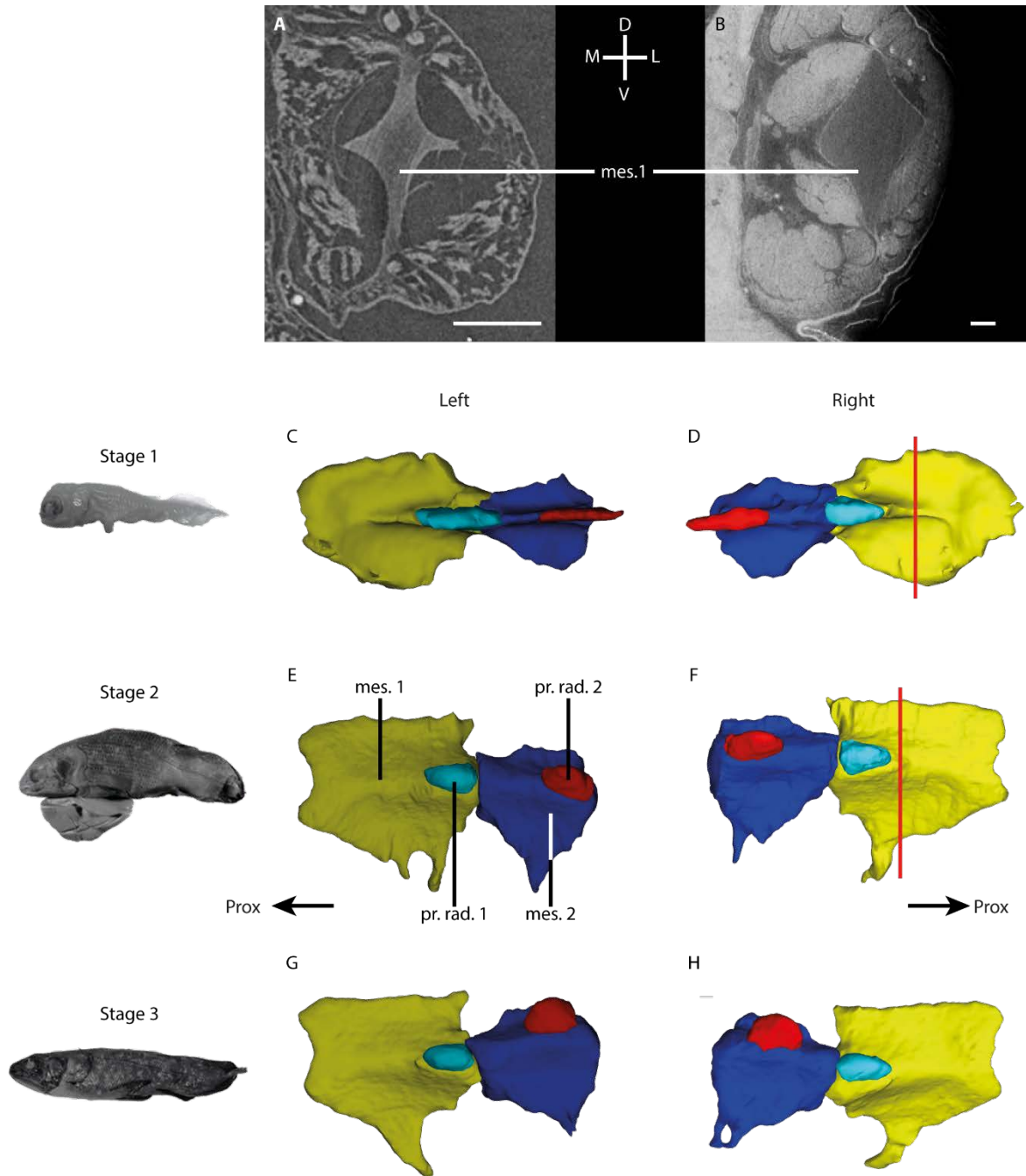


Figure 9: Latimeria chalumnae – Stages 1-3. Transverse sections of the first mesomere in the fetus (A) and the first pup (B), and lateral views of the left (C, E, G) and right (D, F, H) proximal elements of the pectoral fin of the fetus (C, D), the first pup (E, F) and the second pup (G, H). The location of the transverse sections are shown in the 3D models of the corresponding mesomeres (red line). In the fetus, the mesomeres have strongly concave faces (A, C, D), compared to the following stages (B, E-H). The pre-axial radial elements 1 and 2 are proportionally longer than in the next stages, and extend more distally than the end of the corresponding mesomere (C, D). In the first (E, F) and second pup (G, H), the pre-axial radial elements are proportionally shorter and have an ovoid shape. The left first mesomere of the first pup (E) shows a double hook on the ventral ridge, whereas the right first mesomere of first pup (F) and the first mesomeres of the second pup show only a single hook (G, H). The right second mesomere of the second pup (H) has a loop-like hook on the ventro-lateral edge whereas the

left second mesomere (G) and the second mesomere of the first pup (E, F) show a single hook. mes. = mesomere; pr. rad. = pre-axial radial. D = dorsal; L = lateral; M = medial; V = ventral. Scale bar = 1 mm. 3D models are not to scale.

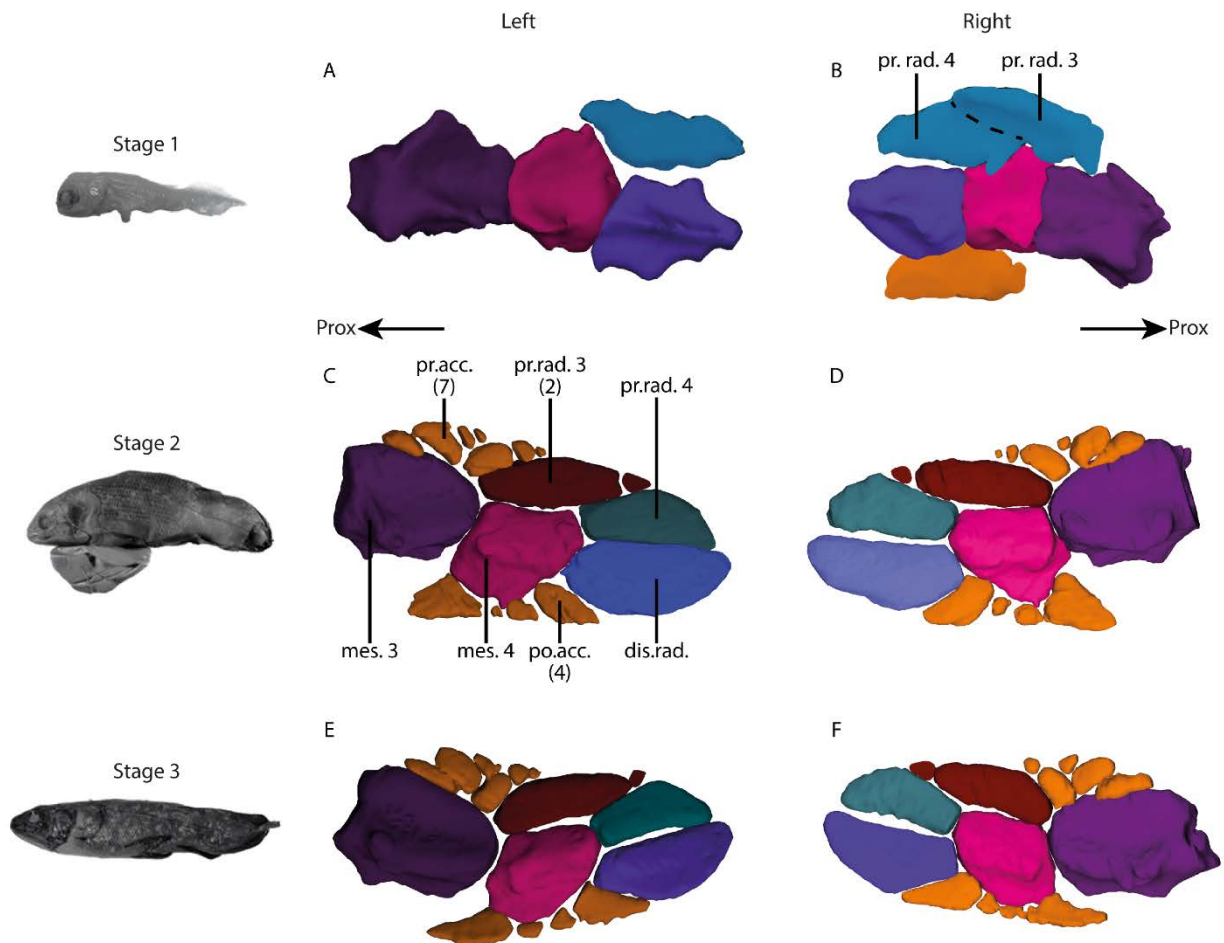
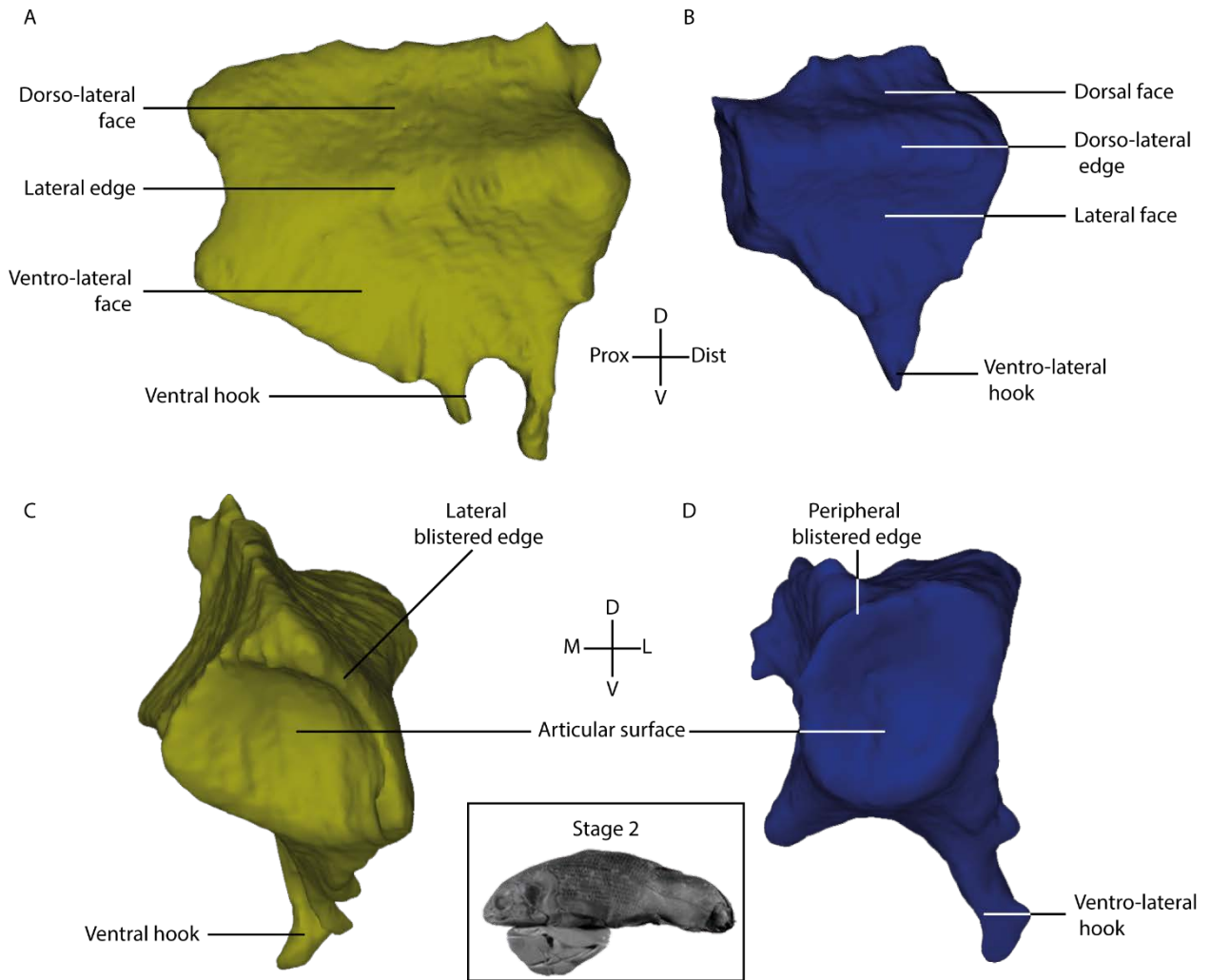
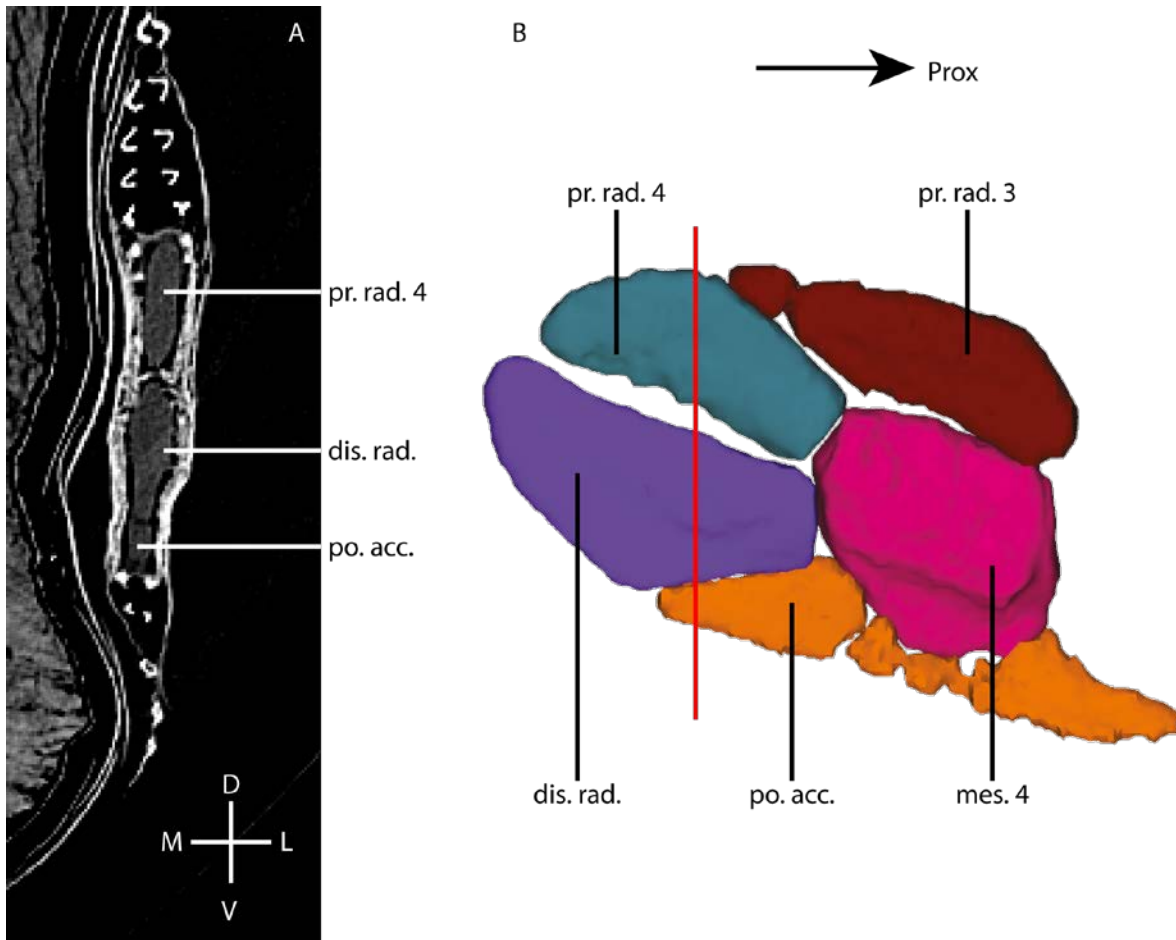


Figure 10: *Latimeria chalumnae* – Stage 1-3. Distal part of the left (A, C, E) and right (B, D, F) pectoral fins of the fetus (A, B), the pup 1 (C, D) and the pup 2 (E, F) in lateral views. In the fetus, the right pectoral fin shows a large cartilaginous plate (blue) that corresponds to the pre-axial radials 3 and 4 and the pre-axial accessory elements in the following stages. The first and second pup show variation and asymmetry in the number of pre-axial accessory elements. dis.rad = distal radial; mes. = mesomere; po. acc. = post-axial accessory elements; pr. acc. = pre-axial accessory elements; pr. rad. = pre-axial radial. Not at scale.

SUPPLEMENTARY DATA



Supplementary Figure 1: *Latimeria chalumnae* – First pup. First (A, C) and second (B, D) mesomeres of the left pectoral fin in lateral view (A, B) and proximal view (C, D). The lateral view of the two mesomeres shows the different faces and the reorientation of the mesomeres along the axis. The proximal view shows the different articular surfaces of the first and second mesomeres. D = dorsal; L = lateral; M = medial; V= ventral. Not to scale.



Supplementary Figure 2: *Latimeria chalumnae* – Second pup. Transverse section of the distal end of the right fin (A) and its location on the lateral view of the 3D model (B). The distal radial presents only two convex faces, different from the previous axial elements of the fin that have four concave faces. dis.rad = distal radial; mes. = mesomere; po. acc. = post-axial accessory elements; pr. rad. = pre-axial radial. D = dorsal; L = lateral; M = medial; V = ventral. Not to scale.