

Occurrence of *Aspidiscus cristatus* (Lamarck) in the 'Marnes De Smail' from the Bellezma-Batna Range (Algeria): An Index Species for the Middle Cenomanian

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Abstract : The Cenomanian formations of the Bellezma-Batna Range are yielding very diversified fossiliferous beds. Among the abundant and well-preserved fossils stands out *Aspidiscus cristatus* (Lamarck). This taxon is assigned to the Family Latomeandridae (Alloiteau) for the presence of six symmetry axes. The outer morphology of sampled specimens documents a low-energy environment with a high sedimentary rate and a mud-supported bottom. Its provincialism evidences some characteristic thermal gradients of the marked Tethysian climatic areas. Biometric measurements are given. Coral size increases from the North towards the southeastern Tethysian margin where waters are supposed warmer; this feature is also underlined by a frequent bio-erosion of sampled specimens. Its limited stratigraphic range makes it a good candidate for an index species for the Middle Cenomanian.

Keywords : *Aspidiscus cristatus*, coral, Middle Cenomanian, Batna, Bellezma, Algeria

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