

Multi-snail infestation of Devonian crinoids and the nature of platyceratid-crinoid interactions

Tomasz Baumiller

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The well-known association of platyceratid snails and crinoids typically involves a single snail positioned on the tegmen of the crinoid host; this has led to the inference of coprophagy. Two specimens of the camerate crinoid *Arthroacantha* from the Middle Devonian Silica Formation of Ohio, USA, exhibit numerous snails on their tegmens. On one of these, 6 platyceratid juveniles of approximately equal size are found on the tegmen. On the second crinoid, the largest of 7 infesting platyceratids occupies the typical position over the anal vent while others are either superposed (tiered) upon it or are positioned elsewhere on the tegmen. These specimens illustrate that platyceratids (1) settled on crinoids as spat, (2) were not strictly coprophagous during life yet (3) benefited from a position over the anal vent.

Key words: Crinoids, Platyceratids, biotic interactions, Middle Devonian, Silica Formation, Ohio, USA.

Tomasz K. Baumiller [tomaszb@umich.edu], Museum of Paleontology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109–1079, USA.

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