89. Eu-discoaster protoexilis Theodoridis (1984)

Discoaster extensus Hay 1967 - Müller 1974, pl. 7, fig. 4

**Etymology:** From protos (= first, Gr.) and exilis.

**Description:** The asteroliths of this species usually possess 6 and rarely 5 segments. The pentaradial variants are asymmetrical.

The central area is large relative to the length of the arms and bears both a proximal and a distal central knob. The distal knob is surrounded by depressions.

The arms taper outwards but their tips bifurcate into two long branches which form an acute angle. The space between all pairs of branches often has a calcareous filling which gives the bifurcation a fish-tail appearance. The arms exhibit pronounced median ridges or median knobs in distal view.

In proximal view the ridges are confined to the central area, up to the base of the arms.

**Differential diagnosis:** *E. protoexilis* resembles *E. exilis* from which it differs in having shorter arms and highly pronounced distal ridges (or knobs). Typical forms of *E. protoexilis* are easily distinguished from typical forms of *E. deflandrei* but intermediate forms between the two are common (compare figs. 3 and 4 in Müller, 1974, pl. 7).

**Holotype:** Pl. 33, fig. 1, sample: 369A-67, coordinates: 122.8/14.5.

**Isotype:** PL. 33, fig. 2, sample: 369A-67.

**Type level:** *E. druggii* Subzone.

**Type locality:** D.S.D.P. Site 369A, Sierra Leone Rise, Atlantic Ocean.

**Occurrence:** *E. protoexilis* has been observed from the interval *E. druggii* Subzone to the *H. ampliaperta* Zone only in the D.S.D.P. Site 369A, Atlantic.