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The diploporite blastozoan *Lepidocalix pulcher* from the Middle Ordovician of northern Algeria: Taxonomic revision and palaeoecological implications

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We present revision of the taxonomy and palaeoecology of the Ordovician aristocystitid *Lepidocalix pulcher* from the Zaouïa of Stita (Great Kabylia, Algeria). An emended diagnosis is proposed, highlighting the four-fold ambulacral system and the typical thecal plating organised in circlets. *Lepidocalix* is here assigned to the subfamily Calicinae of the family Aristocystitidae. The latex casts show fitted sutures between plates, slightly abraded spines, and well-preserved oral surface. The thecal plates possess up to three dipores, each, included into the spines. The presence of such covered diplopores would have reduced the respiration rate, by restricting their exchange surface area. The spines covering the dipores are not articulated and they could have a protective role. *Lepidocalix* is interpreted as stationary epifauna, probably using iceberg strategy to be stabilized into the soft substrate.

Key words: Echinodermata, Diploporita, taxonomy, palaeoecology, Ordovician, Algeria, Stita.

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