**Heterastridium**: A globally distributed fossil from Upper Triassic terranes of the North American Cordillera

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*Heterastridium conglobatum* Reuss is an ellipsoidal or discoidal fossil found globally distributed in Upper Triassic marine rocks. The species appears to have evolved and gone extinct between middle Norian and early Rhaetian time. The originally aragonitic coenosteum contains annual bands as growth proceeded in a radial, concentric manner. Colonies show no visible means of substrate attachment. Thin section study confirms a large volume of interstitial pore space, providing support for a planktonic mode of life and an explanation for the broad paleogeographic distribution. Traditionally interpreted as a planktonic hydrozoan, *Heterastridium* is found widely distributed in many terranes of the North American Cordillera, occurring in both shallow and deeper water rocks. This taxon is characteristic of tropical to subtropical, deeper water settings, often co-occurring with the flat clam, *Monotis*. These distinctive fossils are known from every part of the marine world except Arctic Canada.

Diameters for *Heterastridium* range from less than a centimeter to 35 cm. *Heterastridium* appears to gradually increase in size following “Cope’s rule”. Based upon measurements of the largest specimens within each occurrence, ranging from the Cordilleranus to Amoenum zones, we find a direct correlation between size of the coenosteum and stratigraphic position or age. The smallest specimens (2-3 cm diameter) characterize the middle Norian Columbianus zone and larger diameters indicate slightly younger horizons. Finally the largest coenostea characterize the Rhaetian Amoneum zone. Similar stratigraphic correlations with size are confirmed from the Tethys. It was a casualty in the extinction of the planktonic community before the end of the Triassic. *Heterastridium* may have great value both in biostratigraphy and in terrane correlation.