Morpho-taxonomic re-assessment of the extant coccolithophores *Ericiolus* and *Mercedesia*

Odysseas A. Archontikis

Department of Earth Sciences, University of Oxford, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3AN, UK. odysseas.archontikis@univ.ox.ac.uk

Josué G. Millán

Department of Earth and Environmental Systems, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana, USA

Amos Winter

Department of Earth and Environmental Systems, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana, USA

Jeremy R. Young

Department of Earth Sciences, University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT, UK

The genera *Ericiolus* Thomsen and *Mercedesia* Thomsen & Østergaard are distinctive extant coccolithophores that are characterised by monomorphic, monothecate coccospheres formed of small-sized, star-shaped, nannoliths. Following a review of SEM images from Mediterranean, Pacific, and Atlantic waters, twenty-six collapsed coccospheres with star-like nannoliths were identified. Observations on the morphologies and biometric assessments of these specimens reveal the existence of two unreported morphotypes that differ morphologically from all currently known *Ericiolus* and *Mercedesia* species. The results suggest that the two morphotypes possess nannoliths with, respectively, (1) three bifurcate rays, equally positioned and angled, and a central spine with a terminal knob, and (2) three coplanar rays with small bifurcation at their tip and delicate crystal laths extending up the rays. Based on this and a re-examination of previously published species, we further discuss the taxonomic implications for the genera *Ericiolus* and *Mercedesia*.