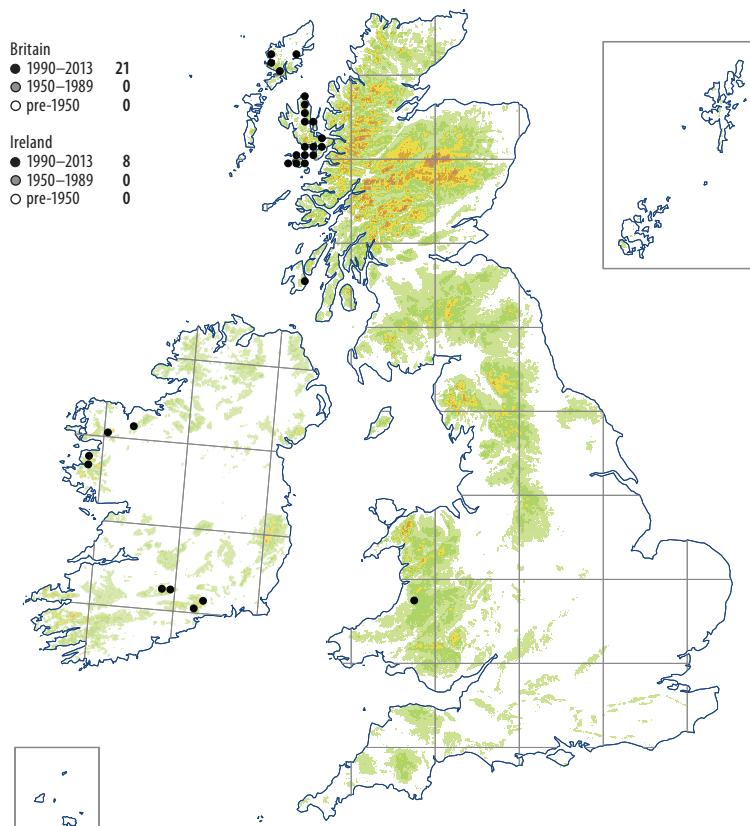


Sphagnum skyense



The colourful tufts of this robust and handsome plant are found on steep heathy and grassy slopes in areas of high rainfall, mainly where north-facing. The communities in which it occurs are varied and often species-rich, including large liverworts of the 'northern hepatic mat' assemblage. A characteristic associate is *Breutelia chrysocoma*. On Rum, it is often mixed with *Campylopus setifolius* and *Herbertus stramineus* (Pearman *et al.*, 2008). In Ireland, it has been found with *Hymenophyllum wilsonii* and various 'northern hepatic mat' liverworts (Lockhart *et al.*, 2012), but some of its sites, for example in the Ox Mountains, are not nearly so rich. Altitudinal range: 30–710 m.

Sterile; sex organs have not been found.

It was discovered on Skye by the Norwegian botanist K.I. Flatberg on 3 July 1987. He immediately recognised it as a new species and speculated that it might be a hybrid between *Sphagnum quinquefarium* and *S. subnitens* (Flatberg, 1988a). It was not seen again until 27 June 2004 when E.M. Kungu picked it up on a BBS excursion to Rum. Alerted to its presence, other members of the group found it the next day in seven separate locations. It was eventually recorded in 22 of the 41 tetrads on the island (Pearman *et al.*, 2008). In September 2004, S.D.S. Bosanquet discovered it in Wales. In October, A.G. Payne searched for it on Skye, finding it in eight tetrads. In June 2005, N.G. Hodgetts discovered it the Galty Mountains in Ireland. The type specimen has been studied genetically (Shaw *et al.*, 2005a), confirming Flatberg's hypothesis that it is a hybrid with *S. subnitens* as one parent but suggesting that the other is *S. warnstorffii*. However, *S. quinquefarium* was not included in the study, so the possibility of this as a third part of the genetic make-up of *S. skyense* is not ruled out.

Hyperoceanic Temperate. Endemic to Britain and Ireland.

M.O. Hill

