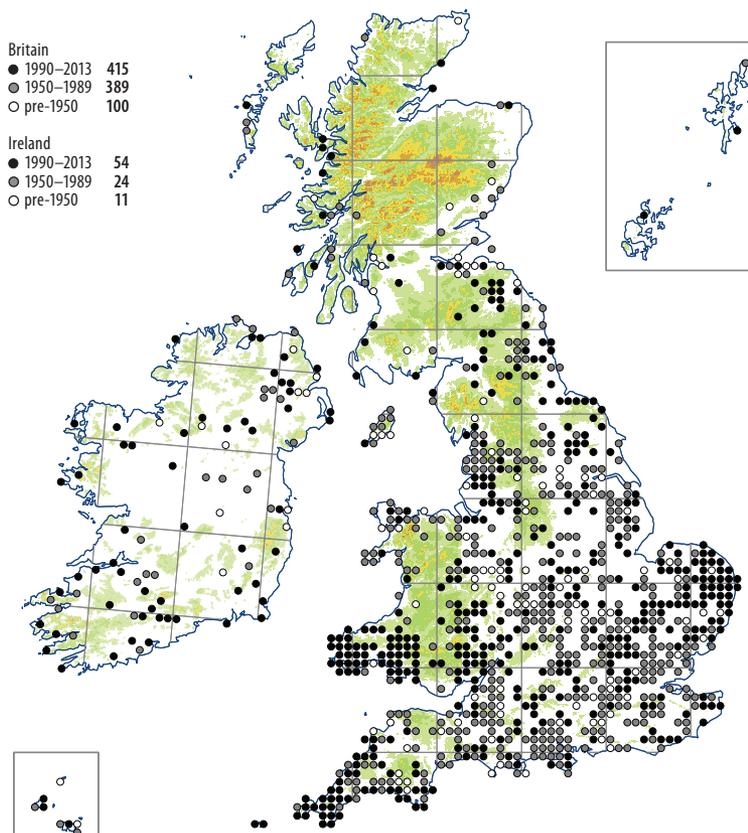


Physcomitrium pyriforme

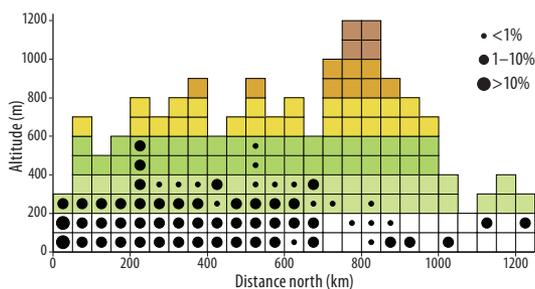


A pioneer species of open moist habitats on base-rich to moderately acid ground where soil or mud is exposed. It is most often found in damp grassland and marshy fields (sometimes among rushes), especially where the ground is disturbed or poached by cattle and other grazing animals. It is also frequent on the naturally eroded banks of streams and rivers or on their trampled edges, on ditch sides, and on dredged mud. The tufts are often more or less pure, but it may be associated with *Riccia glauca*, *Calliergonella cuspidata*, *Cratoneuron filicinum*, and on more acid soils with *Fossombronina* spp., *Pseudephemerum nitidum* and *Trichodon cylindricus*. Less commonly it has been recorded on coastal slopes, cultivated land, and bare soil on rutted tracks and roadsides. It is usually found in open places but sometimes grows in moderate shade in or at the edge of wet woodland. Altitudinal range: 0–320 m.

The records show a declining trend, but because of the temporary nature of many populations it is difficult to judge the extent of any losses. A number of the counties in which it was frequent were well recorded between the 1960s and 1980s but have been under-recorded since. On the other hand there seems to be clear evidence of a decline in Cambridgeshire, presumably reflecting the loss of stock grazing or, where it persists, the fencing off of water bodies.

Autoicous; capsules are abundant, mature in spring and summer.

Circumpolar Temperate. Europe north to southern Scandinavia and NW Russia, east to the Ural mountains, rare in the Mediterranean region. Macaronesia, N Africa (rare). Turkey, SW Asia, Caucasus, Georgia to Kyrgyzstan, Siberia, India, E Asia. Temperate N America south to Mexico. Australia and New Zealand.



T.L. Blockeel