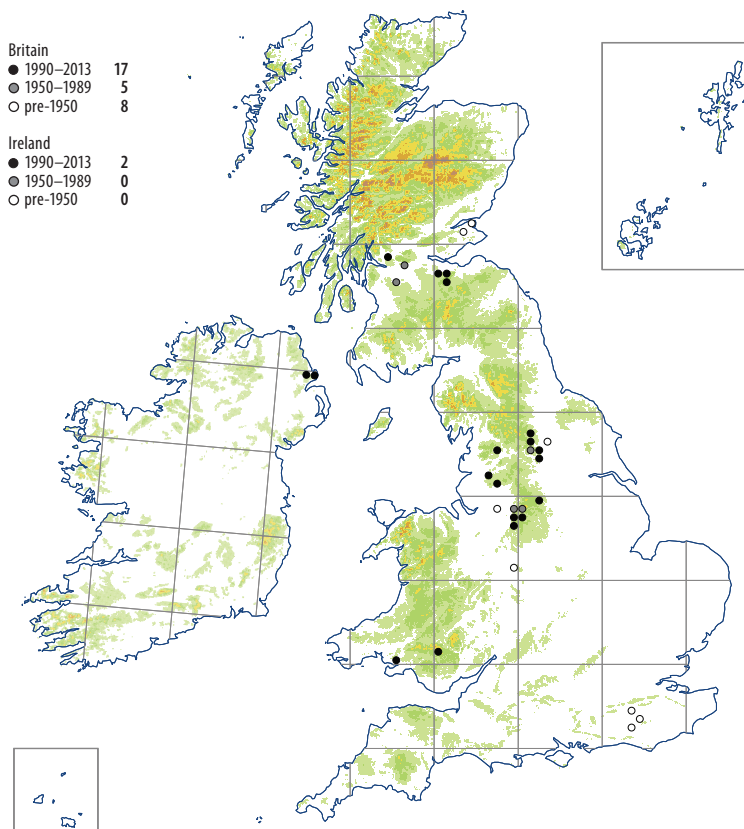


Physcomitrium sphaericum



A colonist of bare, organic mud and clay on the margins of ponds and reservoirs. The earliest records (in the 19th century) were from natural habitats on the dried beds of meres, the first British record being from Mere in Cheshire in 1834, but it is now largely confined to reservoir margins. It may occur in great abundance on exposed mud-flats in years of drought, and in lesser quantity when normal summer conditions prevail, provided that sufficient mud is exposed in the draw-down zone. It is commonly associated with *Aphanorrhagma patens* and *Pseudephemerum nitidum*, and with a number of other less common species, including *Fossombronina wondraczekii*, *Riccia cavernosa*, *R. huebeneriana*, *Ephemerum* spp. and *Pohlia camptotrachela*. Altitudinal range: 35–330 m.

Physcomitrium sphaericum has been found in many new localities in recent years. Many of these new sites had not previously been searched for bryophytes, and the increase probably occurred gradually during the 20th century as suitable water-bodies were colonised. It is threatened by the spread of pygmy-weed (*Crassula helmsii*), which blankets exposed areas of mud to the exclusion of other plants, and at some sites by artificial maintenance of a high water levels for yachting and other purposes.

Autoicous; capsules are abundant, normally mature in late summer and autumn but potentially at other times if conditions are suitable. It reaches its maximum abundance in years of drought and can survive for many years as spores in submerged mud (Furness & Hall, 1981).

Eurasian Temperate. In Europe from southern Scandinavia south to France, N Italy and Serbia, east to Russia. Iran, Georgia to Kyrgyzstan. Siberia, India, Nepal, E Asia, Japan.

T.L. Blockeel

