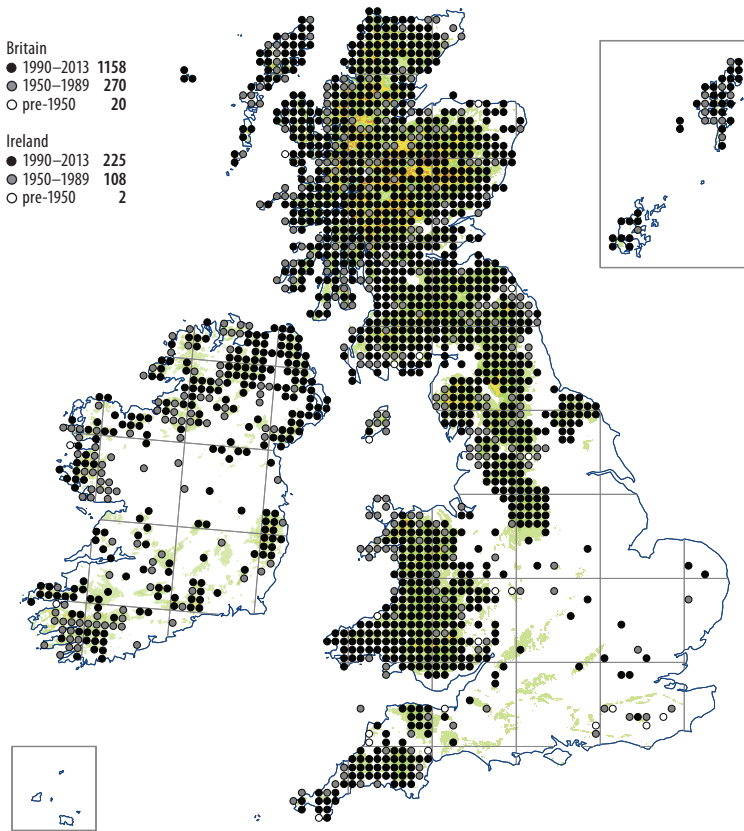


# Racomitrium aciculare



A common species normally forming green to blackish tufts or patches on rocks that are at least periodically wet. Its most characteristic habitat is on rocks and boulders in and by clear, fast-flowing streams and rivers, where it is inundated only in periods of flood and high water. It is usually on well-illuminated rocks or in light shade, sometimes in rather heavy shade. It occurs on a wide variety of rock types ranging from acid to mildly basic, provided that these are hard enough for a firm attachment, but it generally avoids highly calcareous strata. Common associates are *Marsupella emarginata*, *Scapania undulata*, *Dichodontium pellucidum*, *Hygrohypnum ochraceum*, *Hycomium armoricum* and *Sciuro-hypnum plumosum*, but on mildly basic rocks it sometimes occurs with riparian *Schistidium* species and *Cinclidotus fontinaloides*. It colonises man-made structures such as bridge bases and reservoir

embankments. Occasionally it is found in places remote from water, especially on boulders and wall tops, and sometimes it occurs in very dry sites, as on intrusions of igneous rock in the limestone dales of the Peak District. More rarely it turns up in areas that lack natural rock outcrops, growing on damp paving slabs and gutters, particularly in churchyards. Very unusual habitats have included old tarmac and metal pipes, and isolated tufts have been found on tree trunks. Altitudinal range: 0–1100 m.

There has been a slight upward trend in records of this easily recognised species since the 1991–1994 Atlas. Many gaps have been filled in its distribution in the uplands, and there has been a scattering of new records in the lowlands, mainly in artificial habitats.

Dioicous; capsules are produced freely, mature in spring.

Suboceanic Boreo-temperate. Widespread in Europe, especially in the west, north to Iceland, the Faeroes and northern Norway, and south to the mountains of the Mediterranean region, extending rarely eastwards to the Ural mountains, the eastern Black Sea and Caucasus. Macaronesia, N Africa, Turkey. Very rare in eastern Asia (Japan). N America from southern Alaska and Labrador south to Arizona.

M.C.F. Proctor, rev. T.L. Blockeel

