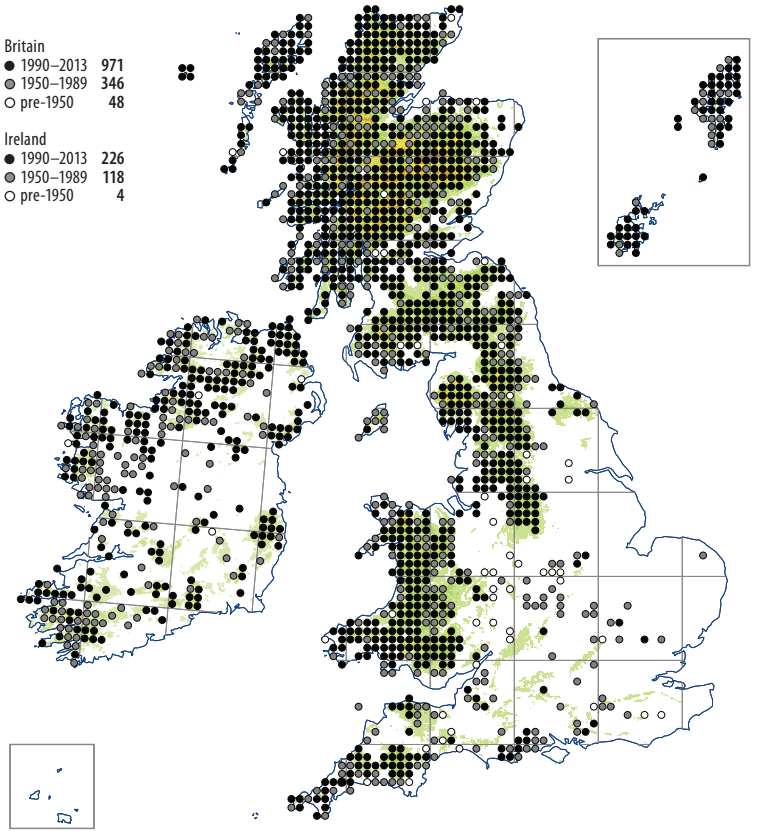
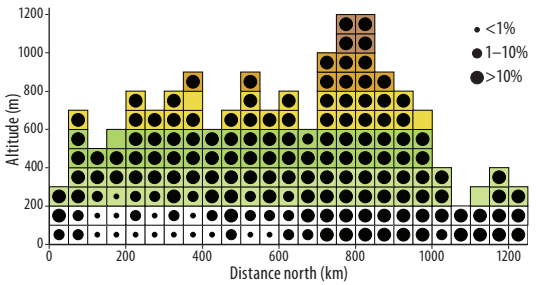
Racomitrium lanuginosum



A common species in the uplands occurring in a remarkably wide range of nutrient-poor habitats. It is abundant, though now rarely dominant, over large tracts of stony mountain plateau, where it gives its name to *Racomitrium*-heath. It is also common on rocks, especially in boulder fields and scree, and frequently in old quarries, in well-drained sites that may be dry for long periods, and it is sometimes conspicuous on hummocks in ombrogenous bogs and in stony base-rich flushes. It is occasional as a minor constituent of moorlands, damp heaths and sandy coastal turf. In some areas it as common on walls, both dry-stone and mortared, and roof tiles as it is as on natural rock and it survived in a stunted form on mortared walls near industrial areas when levels of SO_2 pollution were high. Although it is often abundant on siliceous and other acid rocks, it also occurs sporadically on limestone rocks and scree and skeletal limestone turf, and very locally in old chalk grassland. It is even recorded from gravelly graves in churchyards and old industrial waste such as slag, and may be strikingly abundant on some colliery spoil tips. Altitudinal range: 5–1340 m.



Racomitrium-heath on the high mountains has suffered a severe decline in recent decades. The most important causes are overgrazing by sheep and high levels of acid and particularly nitrogen deposition (Pearce *et al.*, 2003). However *R. lanuginosum* remains a very common moss in the uplands. In the lowlands there has been a decline in chalk grassland, where nutrient input may be a factor, but some sites have been lost to scrub invasion and the deterioration of downland habitat.

Dioicous; capsules are occasional, mature in spring.

Circumpolar Boreo-arctic montane. Europe north to the high Arctic, becoming montane further south and absent in much of the Mediterranean region. Macaronesia, Turkey. A very widely distributed bipolar species. N and E Asia, the Himalayas. N America south to California. Scattered occurrences on some tropical mountains. In the Southern Hemisphere in southern S America, southern Africa, SE Australia, New Zealand and Antarctica.

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