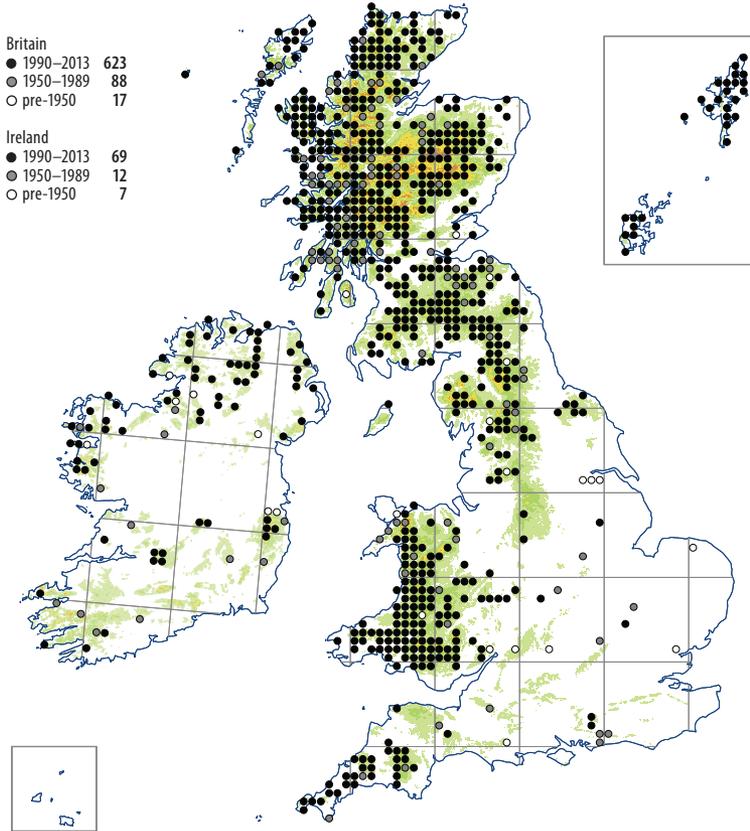


# Racomitrium ericoides



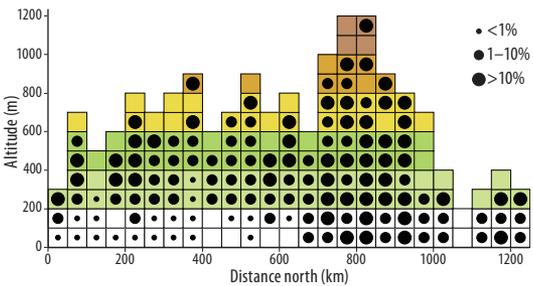
The least xerophilous of the three British members of the *Racomitrium canescens* group, this species is common in a wide range of open habitats. It occurs on dry or intermittently moist sandy or gritty soils from near sea level to high altitudes, sometimes in natural habitats on gravelly stream-sides, open turf and rock ledges, but perhaps more often by the sides of unsealed tracks, forest roads, and in old quarries and pits. When growing in turf, it favours thin soil over rocks and stony ground, and may occur in turn at the edge of gravelly flushes. Rarely it grows directly on rock surfaces and old wall tops. It is sometimes mixed with *R. elongatum*, and other associates include *Scapania irrigua*, *Calliergonella cuspidata*, *Pogonatum urnigerum*, *Pohlia annotina* and *Polytrichum juniperinum*. Although commoner on moderately acid ground, it sometimes grows in limestone grassland or on thin soil over limestone, often on the sites

of long-disused mine workings and quarry spoil. Altitudinal range: 0–1170 m.

There are few recent records from the lowlands of the south and east, and although it was probably always rare there, it has declined further from the loss of suitable open habitats such as old stone pits.

Dioicous; capsules are occasional, mature in winter.

Frisvoll (1983) revised the *R. canescens* group, and defined *R. ericoides* more narrowly than previous authors. It is the commonest member of the group in Britain and Ireland (Hill, 1984). Earlier records are not mapped unless confirmed from herbarium material, and although the map accurately represents the broad distribution, there are undoubtedly gaps in the detail.



Suboceanic Wide-boreal. Widespread in Europe, but commonest in the west, reaching Svalbard in the north, less common in the south than *R. elongatum* and absent from most of the Mediterranean region. Azores, Turkey. Circumboreal, but rare in Asia; Japan. In N America from Alaska to northern California in the west and from Labrador south to Pennsylvania in the east.

M.C.F. Proctor & M.O. Hill, rev. T.L. Blockeel