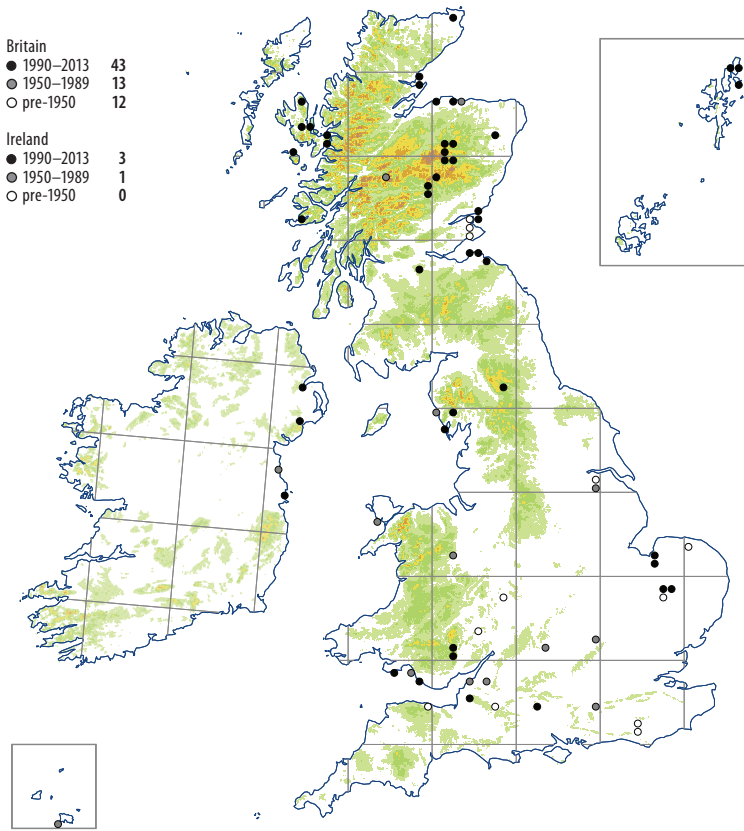


# Racomitrium canescens

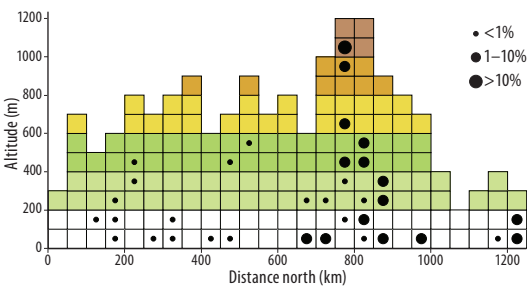


A mainly lowland plant of sandy heaths, short dune grassland and stony soil over basic rock in rather dry situations. It is usually at least weakly calcicolous in Britain and Ireland, often being found on limestone and basic igneous rocks such as gabbro and basalt. It is a characteristic species on the sandy calcareous till of the East Anglian Breckland, and is recorded from the sugar limestone of Upper Teesdale. It extends to high altitudes on gravelly limestone rock ledges and slopes, and like the other species of the *Racomitrium canescens* group it colonises broken ground in old quarries. Associates on calcareous ground include *Abietinella abietina*, *Ditrichum gracile* and *Entodon concinnus*. It is widespread in coastal habitats, especially in open areas and in rabbit-grazed turf on calcareous dunes, but also on broken rock ledges and slopes. Altitudinal range: 0–950 m.

Before the 1970s, *R. canescens* was recorded in an aggregate sense that included *R. ericoides* and *R. elongatum*. Older records of *R. canescens* s.s. are therefore under-represented on the map, and there has undoubtedly been a decline in lowland regions from the loss of open calcareous habitats.

Dioicous; capsules are very rare but have been found on sand dunes in Angus and more recently in the Breckland of Suffolk.

Smith (1976) recognised *R. canescens* s.s. at varietal level, and records made since then are generally reliable. Frisvoll (1983) provided a detailed treatment of the *R. canescens* complex, separating *R. canescens*, *R. ericoides* and *R. elongatum* as independent species. Old records shown on the map have been confirmed from herbarium material.



Circumpolar Boreo-arctic montane. Common throughout much of C and N Europe and in the mountains of the Mediterranean region. Turkey, Caucasus. Circumboreal, with a more continental distribution than *R. elongatum* and *R. ericoides*. Asia south to the Himalayas, east to Japan. N America from southern Alaska, British Columbia and Newfoundland south to Colorado.

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