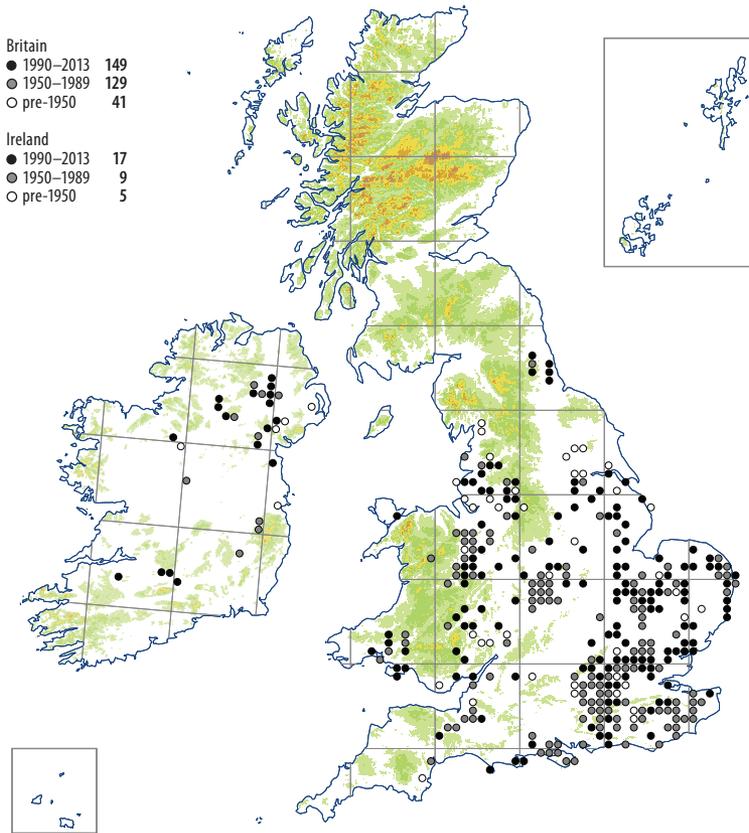


Riccia fluitans



An aquatic species, found as scattered plants or in dense masses floating on the surface of water in ponds, clay, gravel and marl pits, ditches, canals and in sheltered swamps at the edge of lakes. It occurs in acidic or basic, mesotrophic to eutrophic water over a range of substrates including clay and peat. It is also found terrestrially on mud or on flat, damp stonework and concrete by the water's edge. *Lemna minor*, *L. minuta* and *L. trisulca*, vascular plants of the same life-form, are characteristic associates. Altitudinal range: 0–300 m.

Bryologists do not tend to visit the habitat of this species in the summer, so records tend to be made by other botanists or at irregular intervals. In Essex it has persisted at some sites for decades, although it fails to appear in them in some years (Adams, 2004). However, records from Cambridgeshire suggest a long-term decline there during the 20th century.

Nationally, there was a peak of records in the 1990s followed by a decline. Increased fouling by the expanding British population of Canada geese has been suggested as a possible cause of loss from some sites, although there is no direct evidence to support this.

The species is dioicous but sex organs are rare. Sporophytes are very rare, recorded from August to October (Paton, 1999). Reproduction is by vegetative growth and fragmentation. In autumn plants die back to the swollen apices of the thalli, which sink to the bottom of the water where they overwinter (Adams, 2004).

Circumpolar Southern-temperate. Widespread in Europe, extending north to southern Scandinavia. Outside Europe it has an almost cosmopolitan distribution, but confusion with other members of the *Riccia fluitans* complex makes the true distribution of *R. fluitans* s.s. difficult to ascertain.

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