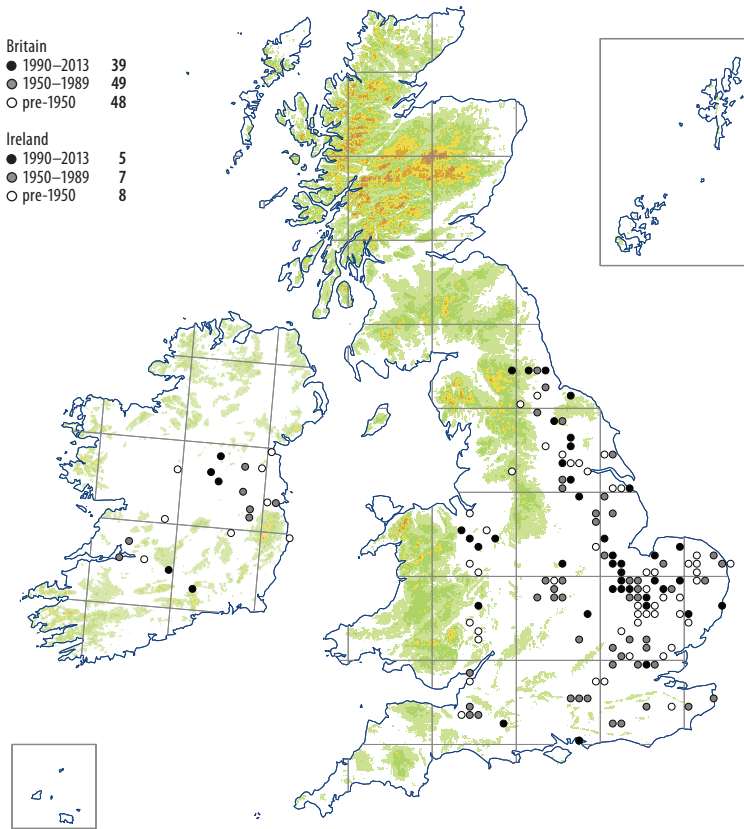


Ricciocarpos natans

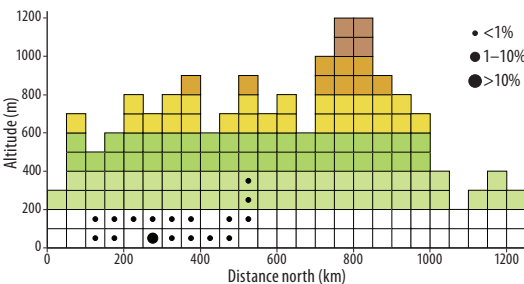


An aquatic, found floating as scattered or densely crowded plants on the surface of base-rich, eutrophic water in pools, lakes, flooded clay and gravel pits, canals, fenland drains and ditches, and the sheltered sides of streams and rivers. It is also found as a terrestrial form on damp mud at the water's edge and in dried-up ponds. Associated species include *Riccia fluitans* and the duckweeds *Lemna minor*, *L. minuta* and *L. trisulca*. It is reputedly sporadic in its appearance at some sites, and it can certainly vary greatly in quantity from year to year, although recent systematic observations at Wicken Fen have shown that there it is present every year. Thalli sink in late autumn and float back to the surface in late spring (Paton, 1999). Altitudinal range: 0–250 m.

There has been a notable decline in *R. natans* which began before 1950 and has continued to the present day, albeit with a brief secondary peak of records in the late 1980s. In Essex it has been lost from some sites because of the deep scouring of ponds, sometimes in an unsuccessful attempt to eliminate *Crassula helmsii* (Adams, 2004).

Sex organs and sporophytes have never been found in Britain and Ireland and are rare throughout the European range of the species. It is monoicous in N America. Like many plants of the same life form, it increases clonally. It is allegedly dispersed by water birds, especially swans.

Circumpolar Southern-temperate. Subcosmopolitan; widespread in Europe, extending north to southern Scandinavia, but absent from the Mediterranean islands and Macaronesia.



C.D. Preston