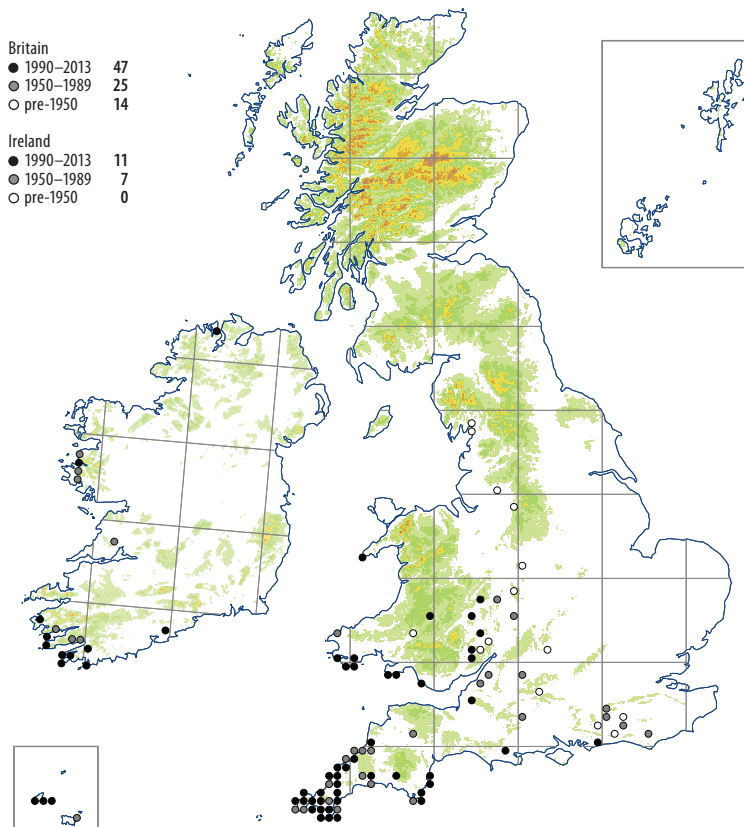


## *Fossombronia caespitiformis*

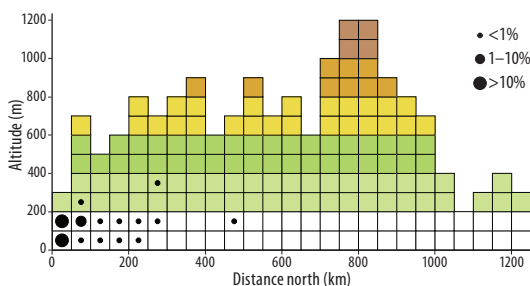


This species has two ecologically distinct forms in Britain, which were considered to be separate species until recently. The commoner form – which almost always has hyaline rhizoids and was previously called *F. husnotii* – grows on thin layers of soil on coastal cliff ledges, rocky slopes and cliff-top paths, on a range of rocks including sandstone, serpentine and limestone. It is also found on damp tracks, roadside banks, and clay soil on woodland rides. Some of its habitats, such as south-facing cliffs in Cornwall, the Channel Islands and S Wales, are subject to severe summer drought, during which the gametophytes die down to tuberous stems. These stems also allow the plants to withstand a certain degree of trampling on coastal paths. A rarer form – which has violet rhizoids and was formerly regarded in Britain as *F. caespitiformis* s.s. – is a plant of damp soil in stubble fields, pastures and woodland rides, usually on acid

clay. The latter form was also recorded from a sandy bank in Cornwall, a road verge in Pembrokeshire, and a railway cutting in West Gloucestershire. Altitudinal range: 0–300 m.

Monoicous. Sporophytes are frequent; ripe all year, but mostly between September and May.

*Fossombronia husnotii* and *F. caespitiformis* were lumped into a single species by Stotler *et al.* (2003), because they considered rhizoid colour to be an invalid character because hyaline rhizoids are sometimes found in other *Fossombronia* species. All *F. husnotii* was assigned to *F. caespitiformis* subsp. *multispira*, which differs from subsp. *caespitiformis* in the number of spirals in its elaters. Counts of elater spirals in British *F. caespitiformis* need to be revised and at present there are no confirmed records of subsp. *caespitiformis* in Britain, although several collections from stubble fields are likely to belong to that subspecies.



Mediterranean-Atlantic. One of the commoner *Fossombronia* species in the Mediterranean region, extending northwards in W Europe to Britain, Ireland and Belgium. N Africa, Macaronesia, tropical Africa, Arabia; Australia.

*C.D. Preston, rev. S.D.S. Bosanquet*