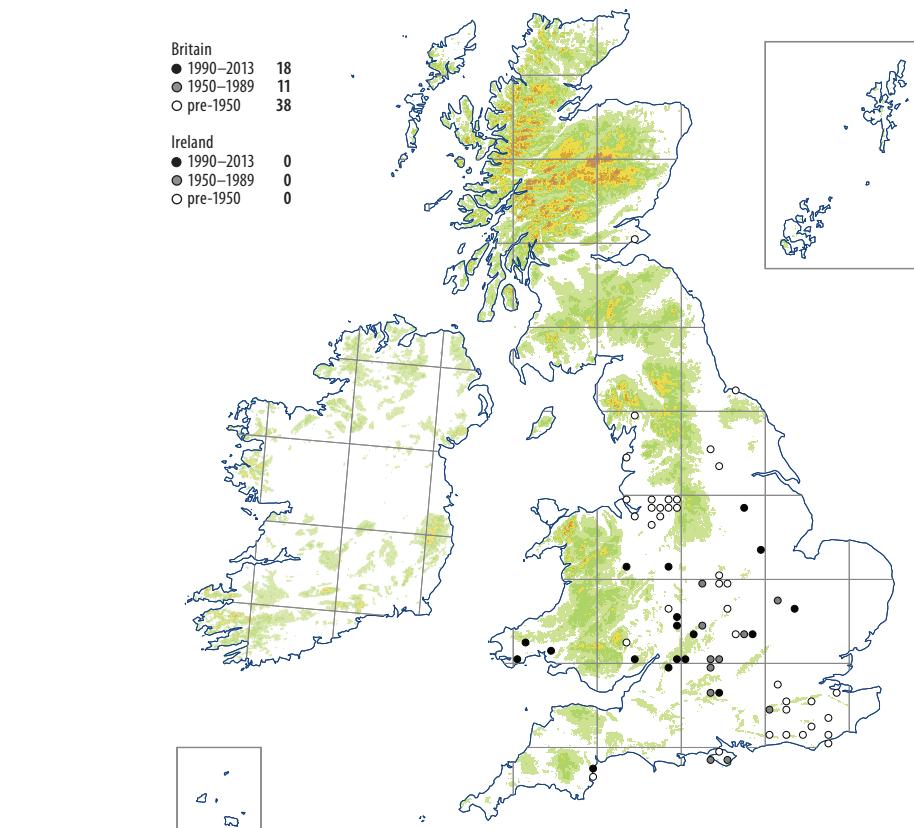


Weissia squarrosa



A rare species of moist bare non-calcareous soil, being particularly characteristic of mildly acid clay and clay-loam. It occurs in fields, on fallow ground and grass leys, and by ditches and ponds, but is apparently very rare in woodland and other shaded sites. Little information is known about its habitat at its older sites, but many recent records are from arable fields left fallow as set-aside land, or intermittently cultivated, and a few are from very ordinary-looking rye-grass leys (Bosanquet, 2010). Its commonest associates at recent sites have been *Barbula unguiculata*, *Bryum rubens* and *Tortula truncata*. Altitudinal range: 5–160 m.

Weissia squarrosa appeared to have suffered a severe decline, as suggested in the 1991–1994 Atlas, but a review by Bosanquet & Preston (2005) revealed a number of recent collections that had been misidentified as *W. rostellata*.

Further sites were found during the BBS survey of the bryophytes of arable fields. It remains a rare species but is undoubtedly overlooked. Recent records suggest that it benefits from the practice of allowing land to lie fallow, and early ploughing of arable land has probably contributed to a long-term decline.

Autoicous; capsules are common, mature from autumn to spring.

Identification can be difficult, especially when plants are not fully mature. Apart from its similarity to *W. rostellata*, it is extremely close in capsule morphology to *W. brachycarpa* var. *brachycarpa*, and this may have led to additional errors. Recent DNA sequencing of selected specimens found that some material named *W. squarrosa* did not differ from *W. brachycarpa* (Conyers *et al.*, 2012), and the taxonomy of the two taxa needs further study.

Suboceanic Temperate. Scattered in W and C Europe, north to C Norway, southern Sweden and the Baltic States, east to the southern Ural mountains, and a few reports from Mediterranean Europe, Turkey, Israel.

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