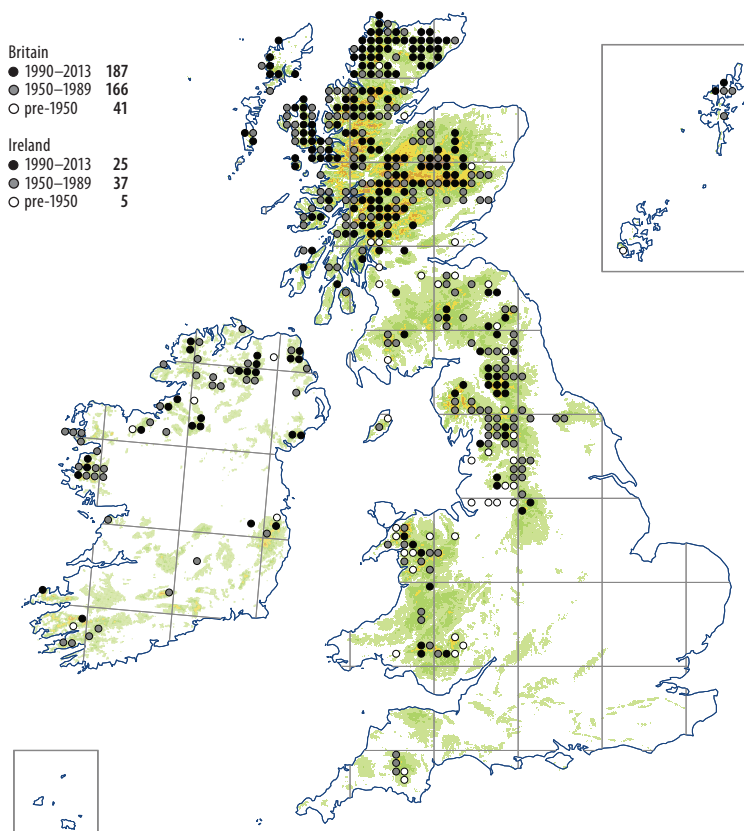


# *Splachnum sphaericum*



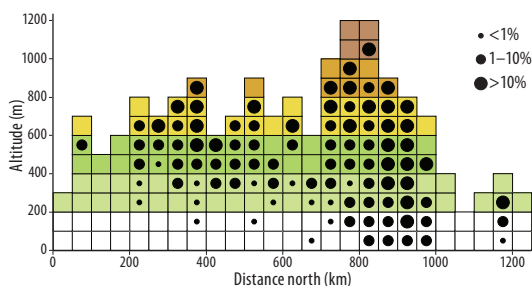
A species with a very specialised habitat, growing on old decaying dung, mainly of herbivores (cattle, sheep and deer) in places where the dung remains moist and decays slowly, and therefore typically found on wet acid substrates, mainly on moorland, bogs, wet heaths and rough pastures. It is also fairly frequent on the remains of dead animals, where it may be associated with *Tetraplodon mnioides*. It is more demanding of moisture than the latter species but is not confined to sites that are waterlogged, and may occur on moorland slopes, the floors of old quarries and other moist but well-drained places. Altitudinal range: 30–990 m.

As a primarily upland species, *Splachnum sphaericum* has suffered less severely from loss of habitat than *S. ampullaceum*, but nevertheless there has been a recent decline. During the period from 2007–2010, O'Reilly (2010)

found it only once in north-east England, compared with 10 records of *Tetraplodon mnioides*, whereas older records suggest that in the 1950s and 1960s it was twice as common as the *Tetraplodon*. It is likely that the use of endectocide drugs to control parasites in domestic stock has been a major factor in this decline (see under *S. ampullaceum*).

Dioicous; capsules are common, maturing from spring to autumn. Gemmae are produced on the protonema in culture (Whitehouse, 1987). The capsules emit a strong odour that attracts insects, which disperse the spores. The spores are held in clumps by a sticky material and this helps to ensure that both sexes of dioicous species are dispersed simultaneously (Koponen, 1990).

Circumpolar Boreo-arctic montane. From Iceland, Svalbard and Arctic Russia south to northern Italy and Serbia. N, C and E Asia, Kazakhstan, Himalaya. N America (south to Colorado), Greenland.



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