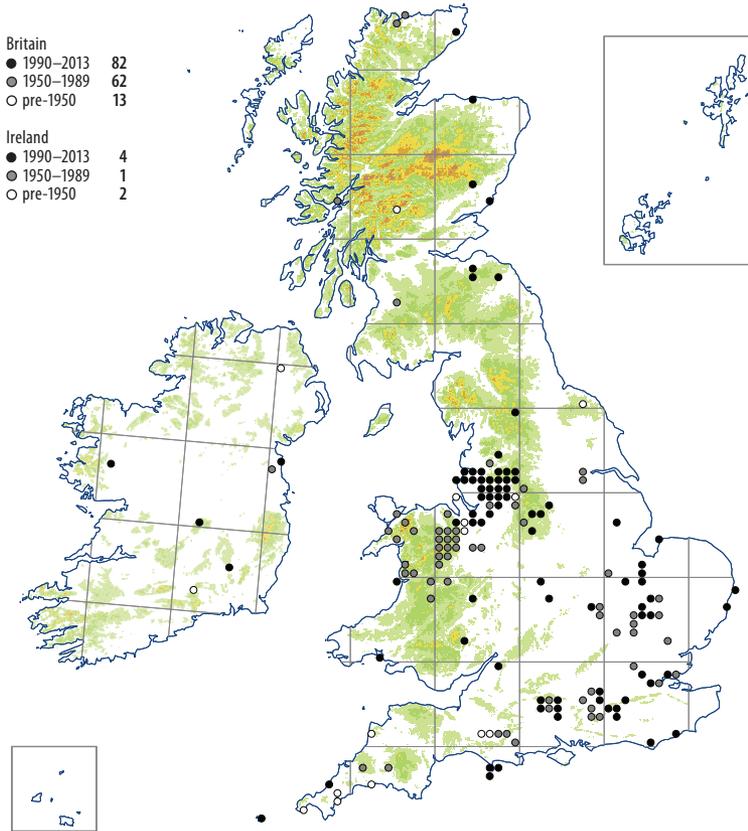


Bryum caespiticium



Grows mainly on soil or sand in unshaded or lightly shaded situations, on disturbed ground, roadside banks and verges, quarries, tops of sea cliffs, sand dunes and slacks, mountain slopes and thin soil over rocks and walls. It is often a temporary colonist of exposed soil, apparently colonising from spores and disappearing as taller plants become established. In some regions, as in central and eastern England, it has been regularly recorded as a ruderal, in untidy places such as quarries, derelict industrial sites, railway tracks, piles of clinker and dirty old walls, and it is fairly frequent in churchyards. Altitudinal range: 0–340 m.

This is perhaps the most unsatisfactory map in this Atlas. Reliable identification necessitates study of mature fertile material. Many herbarium specimens are misidentified and field records are often unreliable, being based on plants

without mature capsules. We have not accepted records unless we know that they were based on fruiting plants, but the records left after this purge are insufficient to represent the true distribution of the species. Nevertheless Smith's (1978) comment that it is "usually common" is very misleading. Because of the unreliability of older records, it is difficult to judge how much its status has changed. It was moderately common in Cambridgeshire in the 1960s, but is now rarely seen. It has undoubtedly declined there, and in adjacent areas (M.O. Hill, *pers. comm.*).

Dioicous; capsules are common, mature in summer. Tubers are apparently lacking: reports of "rather sparse inconspicuous chocolate-brown rhizoidal tubers" (Crundwell in Hill *et al.*, 1994) may have been based on misidentifications. Axillary gemmae are also lacking; occasionally axillary buds may resemble large bulbils but they do not appear to be caducous. Protonemal gemmae are produced in culture (Pressel *et al.*, 2007).

Circumpolar Boreo-temperate. Widespread in Europe from N Iceland and N Finland southwards to the Mediterranean region and often common in S Europe. Elsewhere an almost cosmopolitan species known from the frigid and temperate zones of both Hemispheres and from mountains in tropical Africa and America.

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