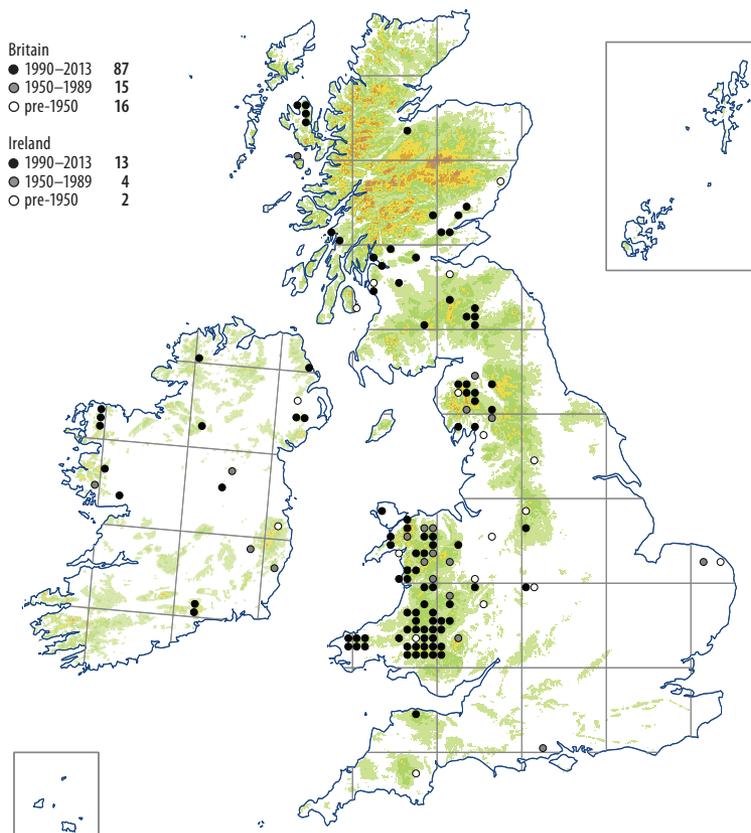


Hamatocaulis vernicosus

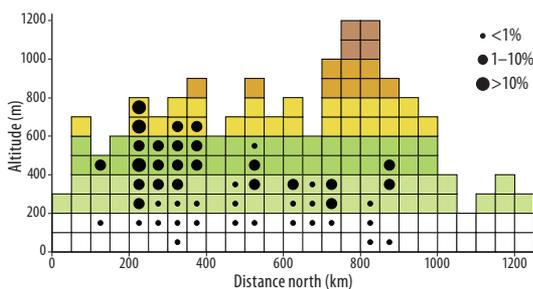


A species of neutral mires where there is some mineral enrichment, especially in flushes, fenny hollows and springheads in the uplands. Many sites are located on level ground where base-rich water merges with acid peat. Other sites are in springheads where mineral-enriched water wells up in wet heath, and on lake margins. Some herbarium specimens are described as originating from calcareous flushes, but this appears to be misleading as the species is generally absent from the more strongly base-rich zones of flushes and fens, although it may occur on their margins. Common associates in Wales are *Aneura pinguis*, *Chiloscyphus pallescens*, *Calliergonella cuspidata*, *Dichodontium palustre*, *Philonotis fontana*, *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*, *Scorpidium cossonii* and some of the more base-tolerant *Sphagna* (Bosanquet *et al.*, 2006). Altitudinal range: 10–620 m.

As a species once thought to be threatened in Europe, *Hamatocaulis vernicosus* has been the subject of much targeted field work in recent years with a marked increase in the number of records, notably in Wales. This does not represent a real increase in occurrence, but the species is clearly not under immediate threat. However it has probably been lost in East Anglia, where eutrophication and the growth of coarse vegetation are likely causes. Some sites elsewhere have been lost to afforestation and peat extraction.

Dioicous; capsules are very rare, mature in summer.

A review of herbarium material by T.L. Blockeel in 1997 revealed that there had been much confusion in the past with *Scorpidium cossonii* and *Palustriella falcata*. Older records are mapped only if confirmed from herbarium specimens.



Circumpolar Boreal-montane. Europe north to Svalbard, south in the mountains to C Spain and Bulgaria. N Africa? (reported from Algeria). Turkey. A boreal-montane species across the Northern Hemisphere, also in tropical America in the Dominican Republic, Colombia and Venezuela, and in Peru. In a molecular study Hedenäs & Eldenäs (2007) found two apparently cryptic species, one widespread in Europe and detected also from Minnesota (USA), the other occurring only south of the boreal zone in Europe, and also in Peru and northern Siberia. British plants sampled belonged to the southern group.

T.L. Blockeel