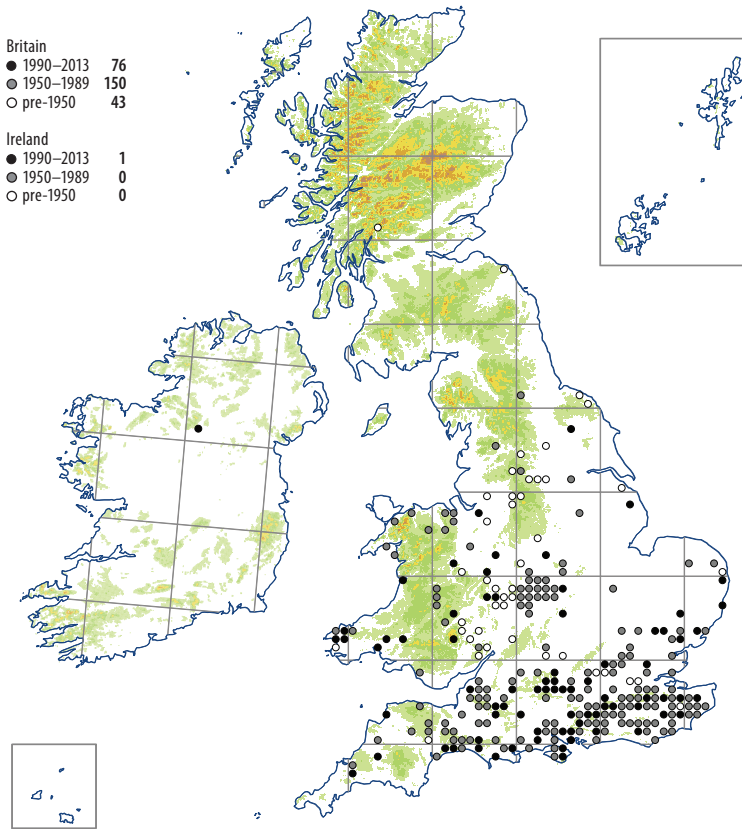


Plagiothecium latebricola



A species of decomposing vegetable matter in damp shady places. It is particularly characteristic of fern stools and *Carex paniculata*/*Molina* tussocks in swampy woodland, usually in deep shade, and with few associates except spindly *Kindbergia praelonga*. It is also widespread on decaying stumps and logs, often on their sides or undersides, with species such as *Orthodontium lineare* and *Tetraphis pellucida*. It is occasional on acid humus, sometimes with *Pseudotaxiphyllum elegans*, around the bases of trees and sometimes in the lower parts of living tree trunks in woodland, as on alders, oaks and coppiced chestnuts (*Castanea*). In such habitats it may occur in quite dry woodland. Altitudinal range: 0–240 m.

Records of *Plagiothecium latebricola* show a declining trend since 1990. Since apparently suitable habitat is still widely

available, it is possible that the species benefited from increased levels of acid deposition during the 20th century and has become less common following reductions in SO₂ pollution. Bates (1995) reported a significant increase in records in Berkshire during a survey period from 1982–1994, when the effects of acid deposition were still widely felt. However *P. latebricola* is an inconspicuous species, and lack of familiarity may have led to some under-recording in recent years.

Dioicous; capsules are rare, mature from winter to spring. Fusiform gemmae, often produced in leaf axils and on leaf tips, are presumably the normal means of spread; similar gemmae are produced on the protonema in culture (Whitehouse, 1987).

Circumpolar Temperate. Widespread in Europe from northern Scandinavia, east to the Baltic States, Belarus and Ukraine, south to Portugal, the Alps, Serbia and Romania. Turkey, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Siberia to E Asia and Japan. Eastern N America.

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