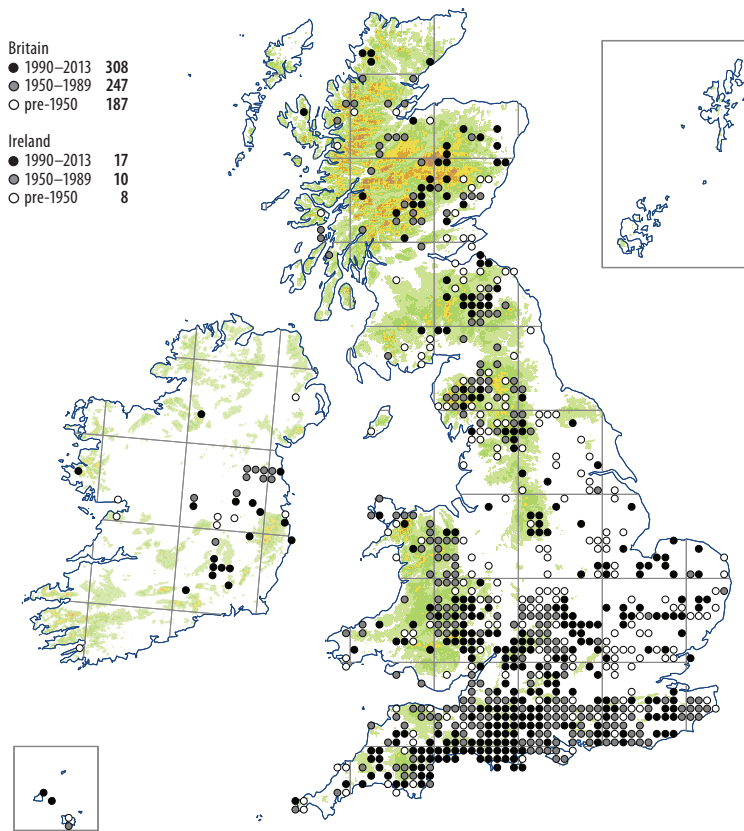


# Leucodon sciuroides



Primarily an epiphyte in many regions, usually growing on base-rich bark in open sites such as roadsides, hedges, parks and the sides of streams and rivers. It is characteristic of the vertical boles of mature trees, and is most frequent on ash; other hosts include alder, apple, beech, elder, elm, field maple, oak, poplar, sycamore and willow. *Frullania dilatata*, *Homalothecium sericeum*, *Neckera complanata*, *N. pumila*, *Orthotrichum lyellii* and *Syntrichia laevipila* are frequent associates, and more rarely *Leptodon smithii* and *Pterogonium gracile*. *Leucodon* also grows on base-rich rock in open sites, and in some upland areas this is the commonest habitat. It occurs on natural outcrops such as limestone and igneous rocks, but is also widespread on old walls, as well as on Sarsen stones, megaliths, and even artificial substrates such as corrugated asbestos. Its preference for old and stable substrates make churchyards a common refuge; it occurs

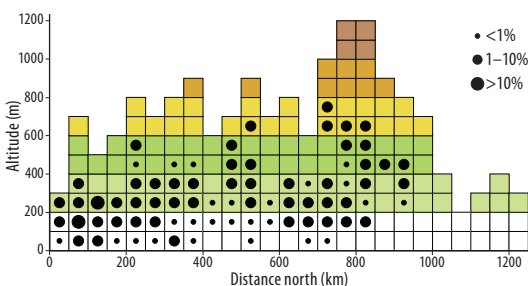
on monuments and tombstones as well as on church walls, especially those of Oolitic and other limestones. Altitudinal range: 0–700 m.

*Leucodon* declined in lowland England when levels of SO<sub>2</sub> pollution were high. Contributory factors included the loss of old elm trees from Dutch Elm Disease and perhaps eutrophication of bark by agricultural fertilisers. However in many areas it persisted on old walls and in churchyards. It is slow to colonise new substrates, but records such as one from an ash tree in South Yorkshire in 2012 are the first signs of a slow recovery in epiphytic habitats.

Dioicous; capsules are rare. Vegetative propagation is by deciduous branchlets, which are frequently produced in the upper leaf axils.

Robust plants have been recorded as var. *moresis*, which is a common form in southern Europe. However Stech *et al.* (2011) found that recognition of this variety was not supported by molecular data.

Eurosiberian Wide-temperate. Europe north to Iceland, N Fennoscandia and the N Urals, common and often a dominant epiphyte on old trees above the coastal plain in Mediterranean countries. Macaronesia, N Africa. Turkey, Cyprus and the Near East. Widespread in the Palearctic. Asia east to Japan. Also reported from C Africa.



C.D. Preston, rev. T.L. Blockeel