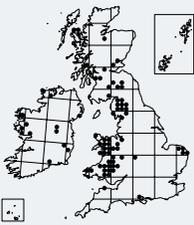


*Hamatocaulis vernicosus**Drepanocladus vernicosus*

Varnished Hook-moss



**Identification** An upright, mid-green pleurocarp with a hooked shoot tip and branches of various lengths held at 90° to the stem. Its leaves are broad-based and taper gradually to a long point in one direction. They usually have a red base and pleats. The pleats are emphasized by streaks of red running up the leaf. Many plants have this redness concentrated into a rectangle at the top of the stem where it bends over: a good field pointer. Shoots are 5 cm long or more. Leaves are 2–3 mm long. Capsules are very rare.

**Similar species** *Scorpidium cossonii* (p. 722) is similar in size and upright growth form, but its leaves are shorter, wider and less tapering. They are also smoother, without pleats, giving the whole plant a shine that is missing from *H. vernicosus*. *S. cossonii* is dark green or dark red, without the bright red leaf base of *H. vernicosus*. *Warnstorfia exannulata* (p. 716) has narrow-based leaves (giving the whole stem a narrower back than *H. vernicosus*), unpleated leaves that tend to have the tips pointing in one direction at 90° to stem, rather than curving back towards stem, and a large group of distinct cells in the basal corners (pull off a leaf with fingernails), which are absent from *H. vernicosus*. *Sanionia uncinata* (p. 728) also has pleats, but is uniformly pale green, and its leaves are very long and narrow. *Palustriella commutata* (p. 698) and *P. falcata* (p. 699) also have pleats, but have tiny leaf-like structures on their stems.

**Habitat** *H. vernicosus* grows in neutral flushes and fens, often with *Calliergonella cuspidata*, *Sphagnum contortum* and *Warnstorfia exannulata*. It particularly likes domed springheads, where alkaline water breaks through acidic peat, or areas where alkaline flushes spread onto flushed, acidic ground.