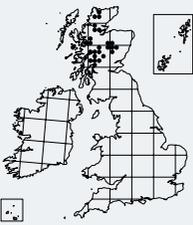


Marsupella brevisima

Snow Rustwort



Identification *M. brevisima* grows in dense, dark brown to almost black, often extensive turfs, with shoots usually erect, but also with many prostrate or arching stems. Shoots are 0.2–0.6 mm wide and grow up to 1 cm long, although arching stems can be longer. Leaves are up to 0.5 mm wide and long. The leaf lobes tend to point upwards, making the shoots more laterally compressed than in other *Marsupella* species. Leaves are erect, slightly concave at the base, and hardly sheath the stem. The 2 lobes are acute, and the notch almost forms a right angle. Male and female organs occur on the same shoot, and *M. brevisima* is usually fertile.

Similar species Though this species is rather nondescript, stands of *M. brevisima* are usually easily recognized by a combination of the habit of growing in dense, almost black, erect turfs mixed with arching stems and the upward-pointing leaves with a right-angled notch, giving the shoots a slightly different appearance to other *Marsupella* species. *M. condensata* (Paton, p. 321) has leaves with narrow, acute lobes and a crescentic notch. It is very rare on moist, peaty or gravelly soil on bare, stony ground high on a few Scottish mountains, where it is often scattered among other small bryophytes, including *M. brevisima*.

Habitat This is a plant of shallow, stony soils high in the mountains, where it grows in areas of late-lying snow and on open summit ridges, often as large patches, either pure or mixed with other liverworts. It tends to avoid the wettest ground, and can withstand periods of drought on sands and gravels by snowbeds. It may grow on shallow soil over rock, but not directly on rock.