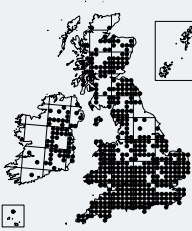


*Orthotrichum lyellii*

Lyell's Bristle-moss

Key 271



**Identification** Well-grown *O. lyellii* is a striking plant, with loose tufts of shoots 3 to 4 cm tall, and dusted all over with brown gemmae. It tends to grow in a characteristic way on tree trunks: sprawling downwards and then curving up at the shoot tip. Poorly grown plants may be less than 1 cm tall, but remain distinctive because of their gemmae and sharply tipped leaves. The leaves are about 3.5 mm long. Capsules are rather rare and have 16 recurved outer peristome teeth.

**Similar species** The gemmae and sharply tipped leaves make it difficult to confuse *O. lyellii* with other *Orthotrichum* species. *Ulota phyllantha* (p. 664) also grows on trees and shrubs, and has gemmae, but its leaves are strongly crisped (rather than slightly wavy) when dry, and its gemmae cluster on the leaf tip rather than being dusted over the leaf surfaces. The growth form of *O. lyellii* is reminiscent of *Leucodon sciuroides* (p. 675), but *L. sciuroides* lacks leaf gemmae and has nerveless, pleated leaves.

**Habitat** Widespread, but uncommon on a wide range of trees, including ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), elm (*Ulmus*), poplar (*Populus*) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). *O. lyellii* reaches its greatest abundance on the trunks of old ash trees in parkland or old poplars in plantations. It is uncommon on elder (*Sambucus nigra*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and willow (*Salix*), although it sometimes grows on the twigs of these species, even in hedges.