

# *Platyhypnidium alopecuroides*

*P. lusitanicum*, *Rhynchostegium alopecuroides*

Portuguese Feather-moss



**Identification** This green or more often brownish moss of running water in rocky streams usually grows submerged. As in many aquatic mosses, the stems tend to be elongated and sparsely branched, to 10 cm or more long. The leaves are 2–3 mm long, egg-shaped to elliptical, strongly concave, and with a blunt or shortly pointed tip. They do not stand out from the stem, but are erect to appressed and overlapping, making the shoots seem cylindrical. The leaf margins are finely toothed, and the single nerve extends well above mid-leaf. The capsules are similar to those of *P. riparioides*, but are very rare in most districts.

**Similar species** *P. riparioides* (p. 758) has leaves that are only loosely appressed and overlapping, often standing out from the stem, and a little wider in relation to their length. *Brachythecium rivulare* (p. 748) is normally brighter or lighter green, often pinnately branched, with a conspicuous patch of colourless cells in the basal corners of the leaves; these can usually be observed with a hand lens on the main stems if the leaves are pulled away. *Brachythecium plumosum* (p. 751) usually grows above normal water level, has a finely pointed leaf tip and its leaves are characteristically curved at the shoot tip. The leaves of *Hygrohypnum ochraceum* (p. 730) are usually curved or strongly curved, but microscopical examination may be necessary to confirm the presence of patches of colourless cells at the leaf base. *H. eugyrium* (p. 734) has a patch of orange cells in the basal corners; these patches can be observed with a good hand lens if leaves are pulled from the stem.

**Habitat** *P. alopecuroides* occurs attached to rocks in clear, fast-flowing streams, both in woods and in the open, tending to form pure patches. It is much less common than *P. riparioides*. It is characteristic of upland districts at low to moderate altitudes, on base-poor rock. It does not occur on limestone or calcareous substrates.