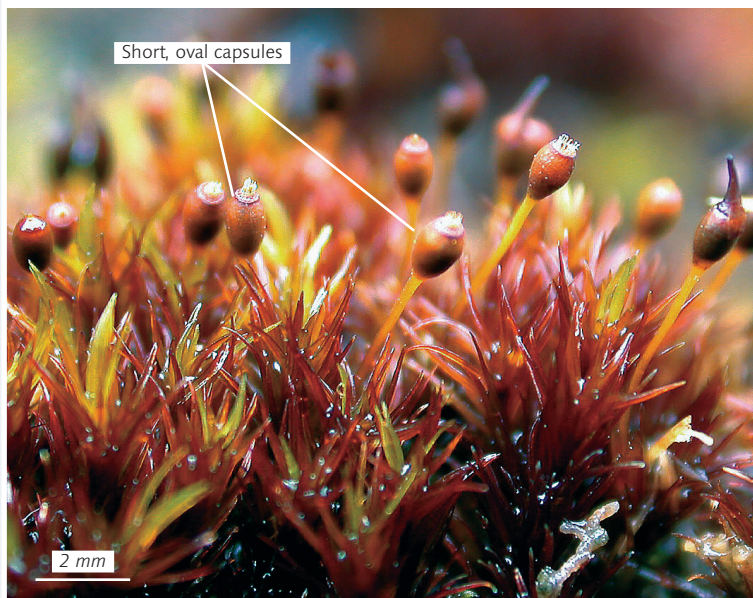
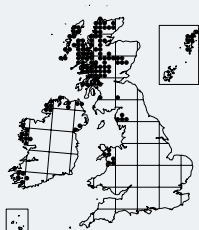


Racomitrium ellipticum

Oval-fruited Fringe-moss



Identification The dark green, brownish or occasionally reddish-brown cushions of this small (shoots 0.5–2 cm tall) *Racomitrium* are seldom seen without their shiny, dark brown capsules. These are distinctly short (less than 1.5 mm) and round compared with those of most British *Racomitrium* species, and are held up above the cushions on a long seta. The leaves of *R. ellipticum* are 2–3 mm long, taper to a blunt tip with no hair point, and because they are 2 cells thick, they look distinctly opaque through a hand lens.

Similar species The shiny, oval, dark brown capsules are distinctive, as other *Racomitrium* species either have long, narrow capsules, or the egg-shaped capsules are green or light brown, and matt. Hair points can be found on most forms of *R. sudeticum* (p. 536) (which has egg-shaped capsules); those without hair points do not have the opaque leaves of *R. ellipticum*. The leaves of *Grimmia atrata* (p. 524) curl up much more than those of *R. ellipticum* when dry, and *G. atrata* rarely produces capsules. *Ulota hutchinsiae* (p. 663) grows in similarly dark green cushions on upland rocks, but has longer capsules that are ribbed when dry, and covered by a hairy calyptra when unripe.

Habitat A locally frequent plant of uplands in western Britain. *R. ellipticum* grows on periodically flushed, usually igneous rocks. It is found primarily in shaded gullies and on north-facing outcrops, but sometimes descends onto rocks beside lochs.