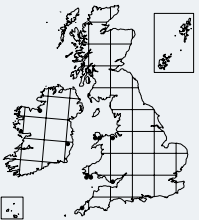
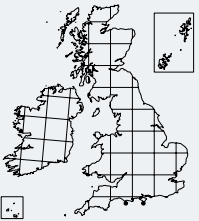


Southbya tophacea/nigrella

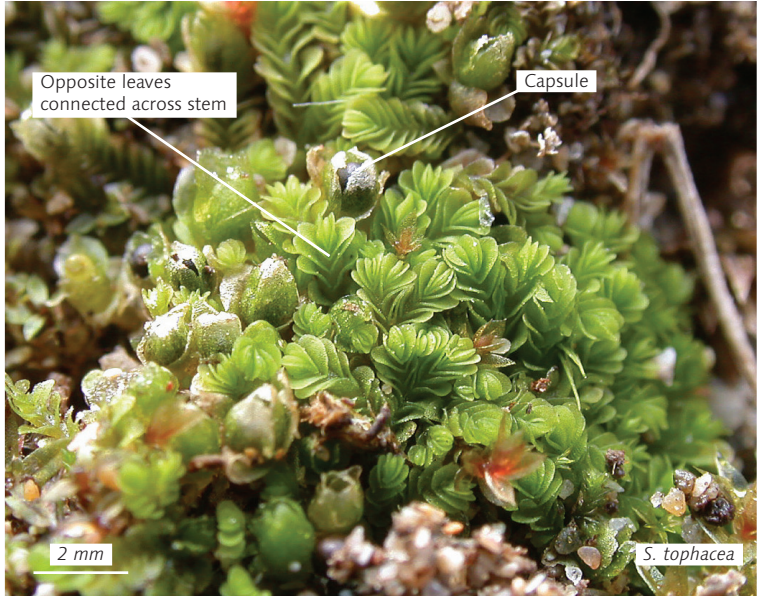
Green Blackwort/Blackwort



S. tophacea



S. nigrella



Opposite leaves connected across stem

Capsule

2 mm

S. tophacea

Identification

These two southern liverworts are both strong lime-lovers, and have very restricted British ranges. The rounded leaves sit opposite each other and connect across the top of the stem, a feature shared by very few other species. Both are very small, with shoots 3–5 mm long and up to 1 mm wide, but they often form small, dense patches of creeping plants. Leaves are less than 1 mm wide and long. The monoicous *S. nigrella* is distinctly almost black, with a yellow-green shoot tip; *S. tophacea* is entirely yellow-green and dioicous. Confident identification requires fertile material and a microscope. *S. nigrella* is protected by law, so it must not be collected from its known sites.

Similar species

The dioicous *Gongylanthus ericetorum* (Paton, p. 433) is usually darker green and grows on thin, peaty soil over serpentine on The Lizard, and granite on the Channel Islands and the Isles of Scilly. *Saccogyna viticulosa* (p. 190) also has opposite leaves, but these are longer and narrower than those of *Southbya*. None of our species of *Jungermannia* (pp. 143–150), *Nardia* (pp. 151–154), *Mylia* (pp. 141–142), etc., have opposite leaves.

Habitat

S. nigrella is currently known only from thin soil over limestone on Portland and the Isle of Wight. *S. tophacea* is slightly more widespread: growing in calcareous dune slacks, tufaceous cliffs and north-facing, coastal limestone grassland in Cornwall, Wales and Ireland.