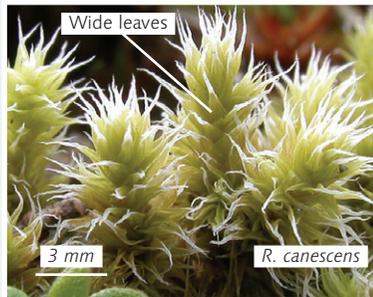
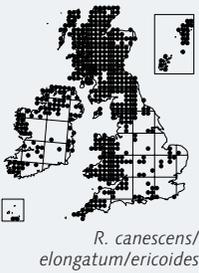


# *Racomitrium canescens/elongatum/ericoides*

Hoary/Long/Dense Fringe-mosses

Key 123



**Identification** The three members of the *R. canescens* aggregate look quite different from our other *Racomitrium* species. All three are upright plants with numerous, short branches up the stem. Shoots may grow several centimetres long, and have leaves 2–3 mm long. They have a variable hair point at the end of very roughened leaves, making the leaves appear matt, not shiny, when dry, although *R. ericoides* can lack hair points entirely. A microscope is needed for certain identification of plants with hair points, but it is possible to assign plants provisionally in the field. The rarest member of the group, *R. canescens*, has wider leaves than the others and the nerve is so wide in the upper half of the leaf that it is barely visible. Generally, *R. elongatum* can be recognized by its long hair points that are bent back when dry. The common *R. ericoides* can mimic both the others, but most often has short hair points.

**Similar species** Plants of *R. ericoides* without hair points can look similar to *R. fasciculare* (p. 538), but that sprawls flatly across rocks rather than growing upright, and the leaves of *R. ericoides* look rough through a hand lens. Atypically small *R. lanuginosum* (p. 539) can be distinguished by the toothed margins of its hair points.

**Habitat** Unlike most of our other *Racomitrium* species, members of this aggregate usually grow on open, gravelly soil. The commonest species, *R. ericoides*, can be found on forestry tracks, slumps in the mountains and in turf. The scarcer *R. elongatum* is more restricted to the uplands, but grows in similar places. Calcareous grassland in the mountains and sand dunes are the usual haunts of *R. canescens*.