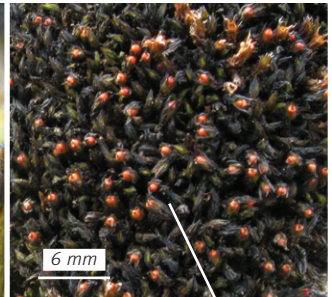
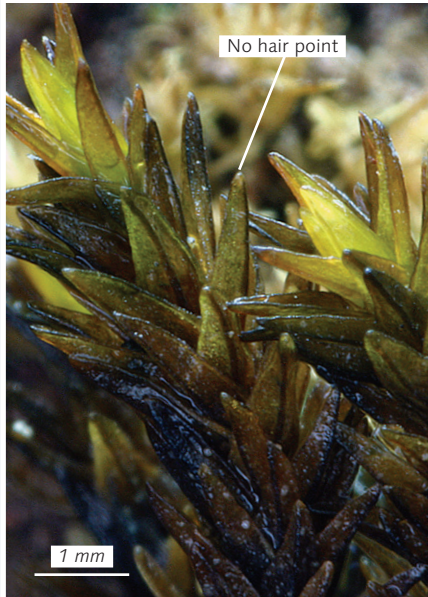
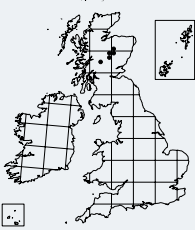


Schistidium atrofuscum

Black Mountain Grimmia



Identification This very rare but very distinctive, montane *Schistidium* forms characteristically matt black, readily disintegrating cushions or patches 1–3 cm tall. They have a soft appearance that is unique among British *Schistidium* species (except *S. helveticum*). The short capsules are hidden by wide sheathing leaves in the upper part of the cushions, making them hard to spot. Most leaves lack a hair point, but a few may have a short one. Lower leaves are 1.25–1.5 mm long; those surrounding the capsules are about 2 mm long.

Similar species Discoloured plants of *S. crassipilum* (p. 511) or *S. apocarpum* (p. 510) never have the matt black look of *S. atrofuscum*, nor does *S. trichodon* (p. 513). The very rare *S. helveticum* (*Journal of Bryology* 31, 174–179), recently recorded new to Britain at two sites in Scotland and Wales, has longer capsules than *S. atrofuscum*, surrounded by relatively narrower leaves. It usually has hair points, especially on the leaves around the capsule. The leaves of *Grimmia atrata* (p. 524) curl up much more when dry. *Andreaea rothii* (p. 314) has wide-based leaves that narrow abruptly into a long, narrow upper portion that is largely filled by the nerve.

Habitat The few British records come from the central Highlands. *S. atrofuscum* grows on dry, crumbly, calcareous schist or Dalradian Limestone that is home to many other rare plants.