**Dicranella rufescens**
Rufous Forklet-moss

**Key 152**

**Identification** When mature, the 3–8 mm tall stems of this small plant are reddish, at least below. They often contrast with the stiff, yellow-green leaves, although these may also develop reddish-brown tints. The leaves, typically 1–2 mm long, are narrow throughout their length (lacking a sheathing base) and when moist are characteristically all bent over to one side of the stem. They have plane margins and taper gradually to an acute tip. Seta, capsule and peristome are red; the capsule is erect or held at only a very slight angle from the vertical.

**Similar species** *D. varia* (p. 366) is the most similar species, but lacks the reddish stem which is so characteristic of typical *D. rufescens*, and has leaves which are less markedly curved to one side of the stem and have recurved margins. Its capsules are less erect than those of *D. rufescens*. The male inflorescences of *D. rufescens* are so conspicuous that isolated male plants can be confused with *Pleuridium* species (p. 340).

**Habitat** *D. rufescens* is a pioneer species of open, acidic soil, usually growing by water in such sites as riversides and streamsides, the recently cut sides of ditches, and exposed mud by ponds and reservoirs. It also grows less frequently on disturbed soils away from permanent water bodies, such as rutted woodland rides and stubble fields in the north and west.

*Photo Des Callaghan Text Chris Preston*