**Warnstorfia fluitans**

*Drepanocladus fluitans*

Floating Hook-moss

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**Identification**

This lax, straggling, dingy, dark green pleurocarp lacks red tones. Its leaves are always curved, but seldom very strongly so. This and its long, irregular branches give *W. fluitans* a distinctive appearance. Rhizoids are sometimes produced on the leaf tip. Shoots may be many centimetres long, and leaves are 3–5.5 mm long. Curved, cylindrical capsules occasionally form, borne on a seta about 4–8 cm long.

**Similar species**

Typical plants of *W. exannulata* (p. 716) look strikingly different thanks to their orange or red colours, more strongly curved leaves, shorter, more regular branches and more upright growth form. However, *W. fluitans* and *W. exannulata* both vary in appearance and can be very hard to distinguish. The large cells in the basal angles of the leaves of *W. exannulata*, visible through a hand lens when leaves are stripped from the stem and held between finger nails, are different from the small ones of *W. fluitans*, but this should be confirmed microscopically. Otherwise, habitat is the best pointer for distinguishing *W. fluitans* from *Drepanocladus aduncus* (p. 714), lax plants of which can look identical in the field – *D. aduncus* grows in nutrient-rich, neutral or base-rich conditions. If rhizoids are present on the leaf tip, a specimen cannot be *D. aduncus*.

**Habitat**

Typical of nutrient-poor, base-poor, still water, especially pools fed by rainwater in the uplands. It may grow among floating lawns of *Sphagnum cuspidatum* or as the sole bryophyte, usually in unshaded places or below a sparse cover of bottle sedge (*Carex rostrata*). Unlike *W. exannulata*, it is very rarely found in flushes.

*Photo Des Callaghan Text Sam Bosanquet*