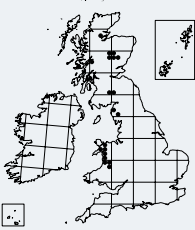


Grimmia atrata

Copper Grimmia



Identification *G. atrata* forms dense, dark, almost black cushions or tufts 1 to 4 cm tall, which, at first sight, do not look like a *Grimmia* because they lack hair points. Leaves are about 3 mm long, curved in when dry, spread when moist, and have recurved margins. The tip of the leaf is bluntly pointed with no hint of a hair point. Capsules are occasionally produced, are smooth and held on an erect seta.

Similar species Very similar in the field to the rare *G. unicolor* (Smith, p. 434) which also lacks hair points, but has a distinctly hooded leaf tip and a thick, channelled leaf. *G. atrata* can also be confused with *G. incurva* (Smith, p. 449), which also forms black cushions and has incurved leaves when dry. Whilst hair points may be exceedingly short in *G. incurva*, they can usually be detected with a hand lens in at least some of the upper leaves. *Racomitrium ellipticum* (p. 533) can be confused with *G. atrata*, and in the absence of its distinctive broadly oval capsules, microscopical examination is necessary. *Orthotrichum rupestre* (p. 655) might also be confused with *G. atrata*, but usually has distinctive capsules that at once distinguish it from *Grimmia*.

Habitat *G. atrata* is a so-called copper moss because of its preference for outcrops of acidic rock that are rich in heavy metals, a preference that gives a clue to its identity. It occurs on sheltered or exposed cliffs and crags, and is often associated with flushed rocks. It also grows in boulder scree and on boulders by lakes. Lowland to montane.