

***Trichomanes speciosum* Willd.**

Killarney Fern (gametophyte)

Native

GB & England: Least Concern

Schedule 8

VC5 Scarce; VC6 Absent

Perennial felt-like mat of branching filaments, unique amongst European ferns in its ability to exist forever as a gametophyte. Restricted to dark, humid recesses, crevices and caves in a range of acidic to neutral rocks. The independent gametophytic generation of this species was only discovered in Britain in 1989, by Don Farrar, however by 1997 it had been recorded in 38 vice-counties (Rumsey *et al.*, 1998). Found in Somerset for the first time in 2008, by Matt Stribley, at two locations on Exmoor, both in dark, humid rock crevices beside the River Barle. In 2009, a third site was discovered by Fred Rumsey at Holford Glen, in Alfoxton Wood, in the Quantocks, where again the species grows in rock crevices above a stream. This is one of two sites for *Hymenophyllum tunbrigense* in Somerset. In 2011, Matt Stribley discovered gametophytes of *Trichomanes speciosum* in crevices on Colescombe Rocks at Hawkcombe, which is the other Somerset site for *H. tunbrigense*. It was re-found here in 2019 and 2020, in two different monads, by Graham Lavender, who has since discovered it growing in sandstone rock crevices at several new sites on Exmoor, most of them on the north- or northwest-facing sides of deep combs. Somerset sites are within the area of the British and Irish distribution of *T. speciosum*, which is mainly northern and western, with some sites in Sussex.

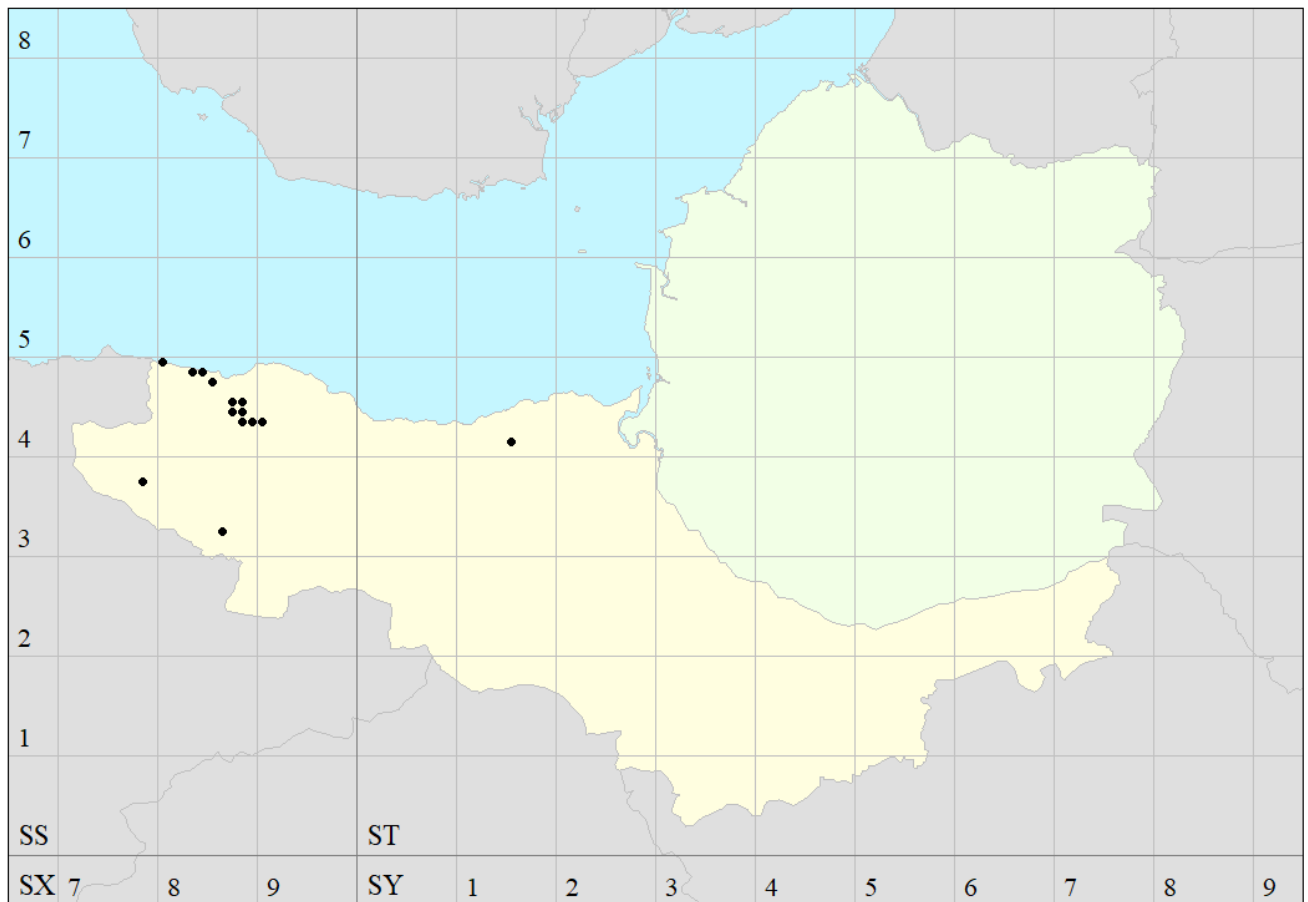
(Following molecular studies, some authors consider this species better placed in the genus *Vandenboschia*.)



Trichomanes speciosum gametophyte at Hawkcombe (2020). Photo: GEL

VC5

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|-------------------|------|------------|------|----------|----------------------------------------------------|
| River Barle | SSSI | SS78833773 | 2008 | MJS | Tiny amount in crevice in low cliff by river |
| Yenworthy Combe | | SS80114914 | 2022 | GEL | On N-facing rocks to W of side stream |
| Yenworthy Combe | | SS80294920 | 2022 | GEL | Many patches on rocks both sides of stream |
| Silcombe Combe | | SS83584852 | 2022 | GEL | On NW-facing rocks above E side of stream |
| Culbone | | SS84384839 | 2020 | GEL | In crevice in NW-facing rock above stream |
| Worthy Combe | | SS85334777 | 2020 | GEL | Under large NW-facing rock, S side of stream |
| Tarr Steps | SSSI | SS86253258 | 2022 | GEL | On W-facing rock overhang, 25m from river |
| Tarr Steps | SSSI | SS86693221 | 2008 | MJS | In rock crevice on W side of river, N of the steps |
| Radford Wood | SSSI | SS87214561 | 2020 | GEL | Under overhanging N-facing rock above path |
| Radford Wood | SSSI | SS87664578 | 2020 | GEL | In crevice on N-facing rocks above stream |
| Horner Water | SSSI | SS87944442 | 2020 | GEL | On S-facing rocks, N side of Horner Water |
| Colescombe Rocks | SSSI | SS87934570 | 2020 | GEL | In crevice on vertical N-facing rock outcrop |
| Colescombe Rocks | SSSI | SS88034574 | 2019 | GEL | Deep in crevices in N-facing rocks |
| Hawkcombe | SSSI | SS88054582 | 2020 | GEL | Small patch in small crack in N-facing rocks |
| Wilmersham Wood | SSSI | SS88134425 | 2020 | GEL | 5 patches in rock crevices, N bank of stream |
| Stoke Wood | SSSI | SS88714397 | 2020 | GEL | In deep cleft in W-facing Rowbarrow Rocks |
| Horner Woods | SSSI | SS89094374 | 2020 | GEL | Very small patch on W-facing Goss's Rocks |
| East Water Valley | SSSI | SS90004324 | 2020 | GEL | Small patch in deep cleft in SE-facing rock |
| Alfoxton Wood | SSSI | ST15504121 | 2009 | HJC, FJR | In rock crevices above stream, below footbridge |



Distribution of *Trichomanes speciosum* in South Somerset (VC5), mapped using MapMate. Black dots are post-2000 records