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Eleocharis parvula salt-marsh community

Eleocharitetum parvulae (Preuss 1911/12) Gillner 1960

Eleocharis parvula occurs as a short open sward which is 'physiognomically the least conspicuous of all sea-shore communities' (Tyler 1969b). The diminutive shoots, only 1–2 cm tall, are frequently matted with (mainly green) algae and obscured by freshly-deposited silt (cf. Praeger 1934). At Beaulieu in Hampshire, stands occur at the limit of tidal influence with some input of fresh-water from land drainage at low tide (Géhu 1973a) but in Ireland the species may extend further downshore (Praeger 1934; C. D. Pigott, pers. comm.).

E. parvula is a very rare species in Britain with records for Beaulieu, Poole Harbour in Dorset, Bigbury Bay in Devon and Tremadoc Bay in Gwynedd. It has a similarly disjunct distribution throughout much of Europe (Beef-tink 1972) but the *Eleocharitetum parvulae* has been recorded from the Biscay coast of France and Spain, from northern Portugal and the Mediterranean and Black Seas. The association is widespread in the Baltic where it frequently contains *Ruppia maritima* and *Zan-nichellia palustris* (Gillner 1960, Tyler 1969a). This led Gillner (1960) to place the association alongside the *Ruppietum maritimae* in the Ruppion maritimae, a view which is now generally accepted.

