

## SM2

### *Ruppia maritima* salt-marsh community *Ruppia maritima* *Ruppia maritima* Hocquette 1927

*Ruppia maritima* is a monocotyledonous perennial which can occur as the dominant in a submerged aquatic community with *Zannichellia palustris*, *Potamogeton pectinatus*, *Ranunculus baudotii* and, within its rather restricted range, *Ruppia spiralis*. The community occurs locally in permanently-filled pans and creeks on coastal salt-marshes, at some inland saline sites (Lee 1977) and also in brackish counter-dykes behind sea walls (Rose & Géhu 1964, Jermyn 1974). In the tidal portion of the outlet stream of the Loch of Wester in Caithness there is a zonation from *R. maritima*-dominated vegetation through *Potamogeton pectinatus* to *Hippuris vulgaris* at the tidal limit.

*R. maritima* can also occur as a plant of estuarine flats and it is particularly abundant in this habitat in the Cromarty Firth (A. Currie, P. Steele, pers. comm.: Figure 7) where it forms a belt of varying width between the salt-marsh proper, sometimes overlapping with *Salicornietum europaeae*, and stands of *Zostera noltii*. Here *R. maritima* seems to behave as an annual (P. Steele, pers. comm.), disappearing very rapidly from September onwards. It is known to be a food source for widgeon (*Anas penelope*) but frost sensitivity may also play a part in its behaviour.

The *Ruppia maritima* has been described from The Netherlands (Beefink 1962) and from France (Géhu 1975) and in the latter it occurs on coastal flats.

