





Since the closure of the railway in 1965, scrub, principally of hawthorn, blackthorn and brambles has spread into the cutting from boundary hedges. The reversion to woodland is apparent on the steep slopes of the north section of the cutting which are covered by mature secondary woodland dominated by ash and pedunculate oak with occasional field maple and sycamore. The shrub layer is mainly of crack willow, sallow, hawthorn and brambles. Areas of scree within the wood support male fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*, hart's-tongue *Phyllitis scolopendrium*, bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and ploughman's spikenard *Inula conyza*. On the lower slopes some grassland species survive, including adder's tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum* and wild basil *Clinopodium vulgare*.

Hook Norton Cutting is notable for its bee fauna. One species, *Andrena bucephala*, is recorded from only three other sites in Britain. The site is unusual in having eight species of the genus *Lasioglossum* (family Halictidae) occurring in close proximity. Butterflies recorded include marbled white, meadow brown, dark green fritillary and white-letter hairstreak.

Forty-seven species of bird have been recorded of which greater spotted woodpecker, green woodpecker, cuckoo, garden warbler, blackcap, whitethroat, lesser whitethroat and goldcrest are thought to breed.

Common lizards occur in open areas and badgers are active with setts present in the north section of the cutting.

Hook Norton Bank is an area of steep, south facing, close-grazed limestone grassland by the River Swere. The herb-rich sward includes abundant autumn felwort *Gentianella amarella*, common eyebright *Euphrasia nemorosa*, harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, clustered bellflower *C. glomerata*, horseshoe vetch *Hippocrepis comosa*, common rockrose *Helianthemum nummularium*, basil thyme *Acinos arvensis*, devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*, carline thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris* and mouse-ear hawkweed *Hieracium pilosella*. Bee orchids *Ophrys apifera* occur on the eastern side of the bank.

At the base of the slope the grass is tall and dominated by water mint *Mentha aquatica* with hard rush *Juncus inflexus*, hairy sedge *Carex hirta*, hairy bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus subbiflorus* and marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*.

The hedge at the western end of the field includes buckthorn, English elm, blackthorn and elder.

Invertebrates recorded from the limestone areas include the butterflies small blue, large skipper and small skipper, and the molluscs *Monacha cantiana* and *Helicella itala*, the latter being typically associated with dry calcareous grassland with a long stable history.