



ROCHDALE FIELD NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

February 2025 Newsletter

February Dates

Wed 5th Feb : Special Event – Minute to Midnight : Gallery Oldham : 11.00am

Thurs 13th Feb : Indoor Meeting : "The Calderdale Otter Project" : 7.30pm : Cutgate

Sat 15th Feb : Coach Trip : RSPB Old Moor : 9.00am : ***BOOKING NEEDED***

Thurs 20th Feb : Local Walk : Piethorne Area : 10.00am : Newhey Tram Station

Sat 22nd Feb : Cons & Ed Event : Animal Tracks : Elton Res : 10.00am

ADVANCED NOTICE :

Sat 15th March : Coach Trip : Sizergh & Lyth Valley : 9.00am ***BOOKING NEEDED***

Keep an eye on your email, our website, WhatsApp group and Facebook page for any updates to these proposed events.

www.rochdalefieldnaturalists.org.uk

www.facebook.com/groups/965410946937744/

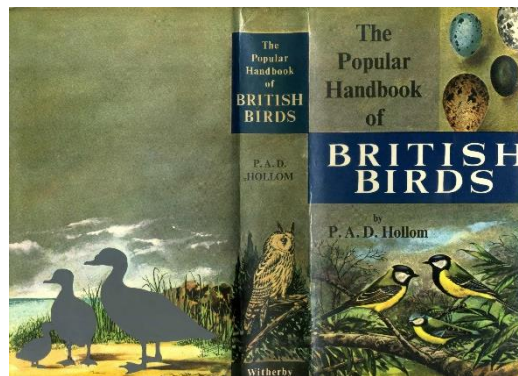
Special Event : Minute to Midnight : Wed 5th Feb : Gallery Oldham : 11.00am

We have received the following message from Patricia at Gallery Oldham, via Sheila, about an event which will be of particular interest to members of RFNS.

"I have organised a special event on Wednesday 5th February at 11.00am to run in conjunction with Minute to Midnight exhibition which will not be available to the general public but by invite only. I'm only inviting the members of a few natural history groups who have all attended various events at the Gallery in the past.

Rebecca Chesney one of the artists will be there to talk about her artwork called 'Red Amber Green' which is a piece about endangered bird species. There is some bird taxidermy of endangered species bird species on display too. I've also got Tony Farkas from The Worm House who is coming to demonstrate some beetles that 'turn plastic into biodegradable compost'. There will be time to look around all the exhibitions and I will also get some refreshments (tea, coffee, cake, biscuits) provided too."

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/.../gallery_oldham_minute_to...



Minute to Midnight is one of Gallery Oldham's current exhibitions. The exhibition title is inspired by The Doomsday Clock, which was developed in 1947 as an indicator to show how close humanity is to destruction/Armageddon. Then it was set at seven seconds to midnight. The hands are currently set at 90 seconds to midnight. This is the nearest that the planet has been to disaster since the Clock has been used as an indicator. Each January decisions are made as to the time set on the Doomsday Clock. Many World factors are considered, one of which is climate change.

Indoor Meeting: Thurs 13th Feb : "The Calderdale Otter Project" – Andy Mather : Cutgate : 7.30pm

We are looking forward to welcoming Andy Mather to talk about this citizen science project monitoring the local fortunes of one of the UK's most charismatic mammals, at our Indoor Meetings at Cutgate Baptist Church Edenfield Road, Rochdale, OL11 5AQ.

Eurasian otters are apex predators in the freshwater ecosystems of the UK. However, as recent as 50 years ago they were all but extinct in England, with remaining populations confined to the southwest of England and the Welsh borders. Andy will talk about the biology and ecology of otters, the issues that caused their European decline, and about their ongoing recovery in the UK and how that may be impacted by current and future threats. He will then move on to the recent history of otter distribution in Calderdale and the creation of the Calderdale Otter Project and he'll present the findings of their 2024 Calderdale wide otter distribution survey. Andy is an Ecologist who is currently working to assess and reduce the impacts of renewable energy projects on wildlife populations. Otters are a personal favourite of his. He is interested in Geographic Information System mapping software and how it can be used in local citizen science projects to improve our knowledge of wildlife populations and aid local conservation. Members £3 per meeting, Non-Members £4 per meeting. Tea, coffee, and cake available - please make a donation towards cost.

For those of you who have not been before there is parking on the Cutgate shopping precinct and the Norden bus stops near the church.

We are always needing members to help with setting up the room and tidying up afterwards, so if you can spare a few minutes just come a bit early or stay behind after.

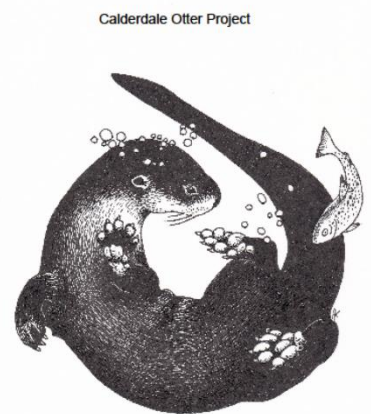


Image by Rebecca Freear

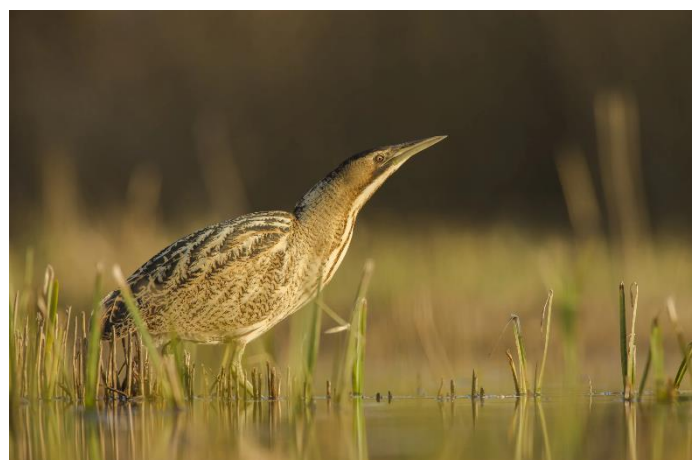
Coach Trip : Sat 15th Feb : RSPB Old Moor : 9.00am : Vinny Holt & Paul Whiting

Our next Coach trip is to an old favourite of the RFNS - Old Moor - which is a popular Yorkshire RSPB reserve that offers wildlife interest throughout the year. Once an industrial wasteland, Old Moor was designed with the aim of providing a year-round accessible wildlife spectacle across a range of habitats – meaning that whatever the time of year there is always something to see. Old Moor has 9 bird hides providing excellent views over a wide variety of wetland habitats. These habitats include reedbeds, lakes, wader scrapes, ponds, hedgerow, meadows and wet grassland. The reserve also has viewing screens and a sunken hide with a reflection pool for photographers.

The winter months bring vast flocks of ducks and geese including Wigeons and birds of prey which send them scattering into the sky. Star birds include Bittern, Bearded Tit and Kingfisher, and if you're lucky you may see Barn Owls quartering across the reedbeds and meadows.

The trails are generally flat and easily accessible although there are occasional steeper slopes.

Facilities at Old Moor include a cosy cafe, visitor centre, shop, and toilets.



Optional off-site ramble. Paul Whiting will lead an offsite optional walk taking in Wombwell Ings and Gypsy Marsh, both RSPB sites good for wildfowl and waders also taking in riverside walks.

Farmland species are also expected on this varied addition to Old Moor. The walk is around 3 miles, on a good flat route with some grass walkways, usually firm but condition to be confirmed on our recce. We will finish at the Main reserve Café and Toilets with time to look around the main reserve.

If you fancy this option, please make good use of the comfort break on route as there are no facilities during the walk. We would expect this addition to take around 2 hours at a moderate walking pace. The coach will drop off prior to arrival at Old Moor so please let Paul know when you board the coach if you will be taking this option.

The trip is open to friends and family. The coach will leave Manchester Road cul-de-sac at 9.00am prompt and set off on the return journey at 4.00pm.

The cost is £20. Contact rfnspublicity@gmail.com with any queries. Please pay your £20 beforehand by bank transfer : Sort code 05-07-67 Account number 60931963 and use your name as reference. Then email rfnspublicity@gmail.com to book your place. Please note your place is not reserved until you receive a reply to that email. Cheques should be made payable to "Rochdale Field Naturalists' Society.

****PLEASE NOTE****

- **"All our trips are run by our Members for Members. Everyone joins our excursions at their own risk."**
- **Everyone taking part in Rochdale Field Naturalists' Society (RFNS) activities does so at their own risk.**
- **We do not employ qualified guides, leaders or first aiders on any of our events. The Society works on the same basis as being a group of friends who go out walking together, and who invite others to join them on this basis.**
- **Event organisers and event leaders assume no responsibility for anyone attending any RFNS event. The Society, event organisers and walk leaders will not be held responsible for any accident, injury or loss occurring as a result of any Society event or in connection with travel to and from any event, however caused.**
- **When you join a walk or other event, you indicate that you accept these conditions and accept that no legal liability is accepted by the Society, event organisers or walk leaders in the event of accident or injury, however caused. Participants in Society events are reminded that outdoor activities frequently need specialist equipment (boots, waterproofs, etc) and the Society does not provide these. We expect all participants on RFNS trips to be responsible for assessing their own risk and supplying their own equipment having first studied the guidance provided by walk leaders in advance. They can then make their own judgment as to whether or not the activities are within their capabilities.**
- **If anyone decides to walk independently of the group, they will have discussed this with the leader, made themselves aware of any potential hazards and be clear about the meeting place and time for the return journey.**
- **Any Medical Conditions that may affect the participants during the walk should be notified to the walk leader prior to the start of the walk.**

Local Walk : Thurs 20th Feb 10.00am : Piethorne Area : Gill Wrigley.

Meeting Point: Newhey Tram Station at 10:00am. Trams run every 12 minutes. Finish point: Bulls Head, Ogden, aiming for 1:00pm. We will pass the car park and toilets at Ogden Reservoir OL16 3TQ at 10:30.

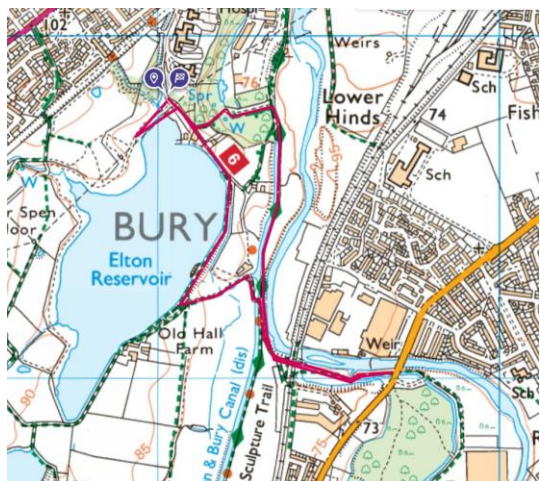
Facilities: There are toilets at the car park at Ogden Reservoir, and for customers at The Bulls Head which is open from 12 until 2pm.

This is a valley I know well in all seasons, but I have not done a recent recce for. We will be walking along Piethorne brook looking for dipper and grey wagtail, then we will check out Ogden Reservoir. Likely sightings are teal, goosander, cormorant and great crested grebe. We will then walk through mixed woodland, looking for signs of Spring, and follow a circular route around the valley. Likely sightings are raven, greater spotted woodpecker, and flocks of winter thrushes. There may be the odd stile, but if any are dodgy on the recce, I will avoid these on the day. Some paths may be muddy.

The walk will be about 3 miles and just for the morning, returning to The Bulls Head for 1pm, which is a short walk from the carpark.



Conservation & Education : Sat 22nd Feb : 10.00am : Animal Tracks : Jenny Short



Meet in the car park at Elton Reservoir at 10am. The car park can be accessed from the A58 (Bolton and Bury Road). If coming from Rochdale turn left down Kitchener Street opposite the Wellington Pub and follow the signposts to the reservoir. The car park is fairly small so it would be a good idea to share cars.

We will follow the route shown on the map (about 2 miles) looking for mammal tracks and signs of their presence. The route is fairly flat with no stiles but may be muddy in places (great for animal tracks). We have some mammal tracks ID sheets but if you have your own, please bring it with you.

The plan is to be back for lunch time but you may wish to bring a snack.

Request from the RFNS Treasurer

As most of you will be aware I intended standing down as Treasurer at the last AGM.

Unfortunately, no one has come forward to take on the role. The role is probably not as onerous as you may think. But just in case someone is thinking of having a go but are unsure of taking over there are the following option for a handover: -

- Very Confident - just take over
- Bit unsure, take over but I will remain as deputy treasurer whilst they settle into the role and are happy to go it alone.
- Very unsure, come on board as deputy treasure and have a look at what goes on and steadily take over.

I'm happy to provide support up until completing the next set of financial statements in August. So, rest assured you won't be left on your own if you don't want to be.

Following an audit of the Society's assets, we are trying to locate the following FSC sheets. If you are currently in possession of any of them please can you let me know via

rfnstreasurer@gmail.com

FSC,269,BritishBugs(Insecta,Hemiptera)x1,

FSC,166,BeetleFamiliesKeyx1

FSCSheet,OP79,Snailsx1,

FSC,OP167,TerrestrialInvertebratesx1

FSCSheet,OP160,SlugsOfBritainAndIrelandx1

Many thanks : Ruth Hardcastle - Acting Treasurer

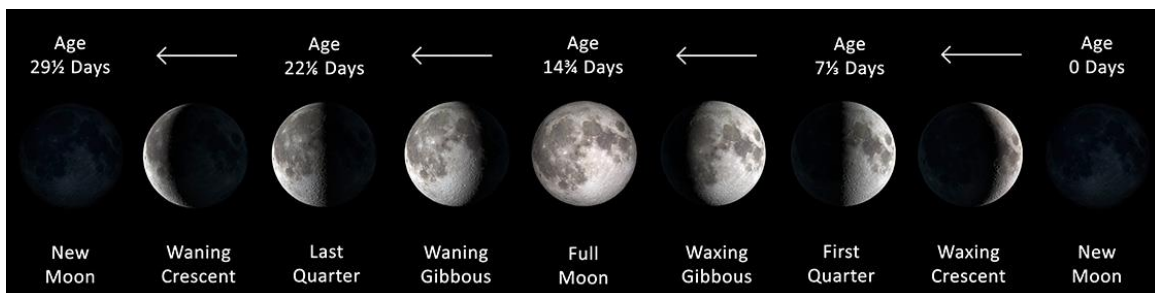
Our Moon Lucy Entwisle

Without question. Sickly Western. Gleams our Moon.
Growing waxing. Then a-maxing. Fully soon.

From East to West. We see her best. The Welkin clear.
Planets brilliant. Stars ebullient. Beyond the sphere.

Cycle waning. Darker gaining. Gibbous view.
Soon sequestern. Sickly Eastern. Moon anew.

Gravity causing. High tides drawing. Twice a day
By Satellite. The Sun her acolyte. Come what may -
Our Moon



Lorna-Lucy Doherty née Entwisle
Bacup - 23rd January 2025

(Editor's Note : It always amazes me that Lucy puts so much background research into her poems. She tells me that she enjoys that aspect of her poetry as it helps to keep her mind sharp! Good advice to us all there.)

Addendum - E&OE

Earth's only satellite

Moon's orbit elliptical

Distance from Earth's surface to Moon's surface -

Perigee: Closest 225,623 miles 363,104 km

Apogee: Furthest 252,088 miles 404,696 km

Synchronous rotation:

The Moon always faces towards Earth - because it rotates at the same rate as it orbits Earth.

High and low tides caused by - Gravitational pull of the Moon and Sun on Earth's oceans

Spring Tide ("King tide") - during Full and New Moon

Neap Tide ("Moderate tide") - 7 days after Spring Tide, when Sun and Moon are at right angles to each other.

Moon's axis = 5°

Earth and Moon rotate counter clockwise. They orbit the Sun counter clockwise

Synodic period round Sun: 29.5 days takes Moon to orbit Earth

Sidereal period relative to stars : 27.3 days

Moon is moving away from Earth: 1.5" = nearly 4cm per year

Sun rotates counter clockwise: Takes 27.2753 days

Moon phases: New Moon/Waxing crescent/First quarter/Waxing gibbous. Full Moon/Waning gibbous/Third quarter/Waning crescent. New Moon

Refs: WikiHow, Wikipedia, NASA Science Size, Royal Museums Greenwich, SpaceWeatherLive, MooMooMath and Science, NOAA

Sad News

I am sure that many members will remember Charles Flynn with great affection. He was a veritable fountain of knowledge on all aspects of nature. Sadly, he had been in bad health and passed away just before Christmas. Many of you may also remember Marolyn Colley, a stalwart of the Society who died in the summer. I am saddened to report that her husband John has now also died.

New Year's Day Birding Challenge 2025 : Pam Crofts

To welcome in 2025 a few intrepid Field Nat's accepted the challenge of seeing how many species of birds they could record between the hours of dawn and dusk on January 1st. Unlike last year, when the weather was amazingly kind to us, the forecast was dire and it was decided to give people the option of leaving the challenge until the following day which was freezing but dry. Only one team was brave enough to venture out at dawn on the 1st January and they were rewarded by finding paths flooded and hides inaccessible at their chosen start point of Pennington Flash! That was still the situation there on the following day when a second team tried their luck. This year we recorded 60 species between us, which was 12 down from 2024. After the stormy weather water levels were very high everywhere so there were no muddy shorelines for wading birds, while deep and fast flowing waterways meant little chance of Dipper or Kingfisher sightings. The only wader seen was an Oystercatcher at Pennington Flash. Other locations visited included; Etherow Country Park, which provided Mandarin Ducks; Elton Reservoir, which produced Willow Tit, Ring-necked Parakeets, Goosander and Goldeneye; Hollingworth Lake area provided a Yellow-legged Gull, and the only Buzzard and Rook of the day; Watergrove and Ashworth Reservoirs were also visited in the hope of seeing owls but both disappointed. However, a special mention is due to Pete's garden which rewarded him with a Siskin!

RESULTS: Winners were Paul and John amassing 50 species; Roger and Pam got 46; while Ruth and Gill achieved a very respectable 39 after braving the weather on the 1st; Pat and Maggie managed 33 species on a nine mile walk from home; and Pete got 18 species just in his garden. A full list of species is attached, and a second one giving details of locations and sightings for each team.

Thanks to everyone who took part.
Pam Crofts

March Newsletter : If you have something you would like included in the March 2025 newsletter, please send it to rfnsnewsletter@gmail.com by **Tuesday 18th Feb** as the Editor is on holiday a couple of days later.

Newsletter Title Colour Coding : **Green = Society Information** **Red = Member Contribution**

Keep an eye on your emails as well as our information sources :

www.rochdalefieldnaturalists.org.uk

www.facebook.com/groups/965410946937744/ and our WhatsApp page

