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RSPB Old Moor and the Dearne Valley

February 2019



Abstract This article explores the history, creation, management and wildlife of RSPB Old Moor and the other sites that make up the Dearne Valley reserves in Yorkshire. In the 1980s, the area was a picture of dereliction – a post-industrial landscape including the bulldozed remains of the pits, coking plant and railway marshalling yards, known locally as ‘Hell’s Kitchen’ because of the frequent fires that broke out there. The year-long miners’ strike in 1984–85 left little hope and certainly little prospect of work. Now, the focus is on Eurasian Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris*, breeding waders and helping people to engage with nature. This is an encouraging case study of how a once heavily polluted area can be regenerated with nature at its heart; of how local people

can make a difference when they work together towards a common goal; and of how strong partnerships have built on the foundations laid by those local birders.



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2019 Vol.112: Pages 70–88

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