



Plate 280. BioHaven in the lee of the island, Hogganfield Loch, Clyde, April 2016. © *Jim Coyle*

Breeding success and a potential first for Scotland

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A pair of Great Crested Grebes has successfully nested on an artificial floating island on Hogganfield Loch in Glasgow, producing one young. The islands, known as BioHavens, were installed by the Friends of Glasgow's Local Nature Reserves in April 2016 and it is the first time that BioHavens have been used by breeding grebes in Scotland. Published research suggests that it may also be the first time that grebes have used any sort of 'artificial' floating island north of the border (Burgess & Hirons 1992).

The 'Friends' embarked on this ambitious project, aimed at installing five floating islands (BioHavens) on Hogganfield Loch, in 2015. BioHavens were chosen as research showed that they outperform all other floating islands with respect to durability and longevity. They have integral buoyancy, 'naturalise' over time, and have a design life of over 20 years. The islands are proven in the field with 5,000 installations globally and over a decade's worth of research and monitoring data on water quality and ecology.

It was hoped that the islands would help achieve a number of beneficial outcomes for wetland birds at Hogganfield Loch including creating:

- i) nesting opportunities that would not be susceptible to wave action and flooding. More specifically, they hoped that they would be used by Great Crested Grebes despite research indicating that this hadn't happened before in Scotland; and
- ii) safe roosting and preening opportunities.



Plate 281. BioHaven with five species loafing, Hogganfield Loch, Clyde, August 2016. © *Jimmy Maxwell*

The proposal received the support of officers in Glasgow City Council, the Seven Lochs Project, MyPark Scotland and the RSPB, as well as local councillors and members of the public. After much effort, they obtained funds from EB Scotland Ltd (landfill credits), Glasgow Natural History Society and crowd funding via MyPark Scotland towards the cost of the BioHavens, their installation and maintenance as well as water quality monitoring. Five BioHavens were purchased from a company called Frog Environmental and on 6 April 2016, the islands were planted up by volunteers and launched and installed by Frog Environmental staff.

Monitoring showed that the islands were proving popular with Pochard, Tufted Duck Gadwall, Coot, Black-headed Gull, Grey Heron, Mute Swan and Greylag Goose for loafing, preening and roosting. There was also a report of a Great Crested Grebe sitting on one of the islands. Careful observation soon confirmed that a pair was in fact nesting and an adult bird was photographed with at least two eggs on 18 July 2016. Further visits showed an adult bird sitting tight despite other birds visiting and resting on the island. These visits were tolerated, apart from when some birds were deemed to get too close and the sitting bird chased them off.

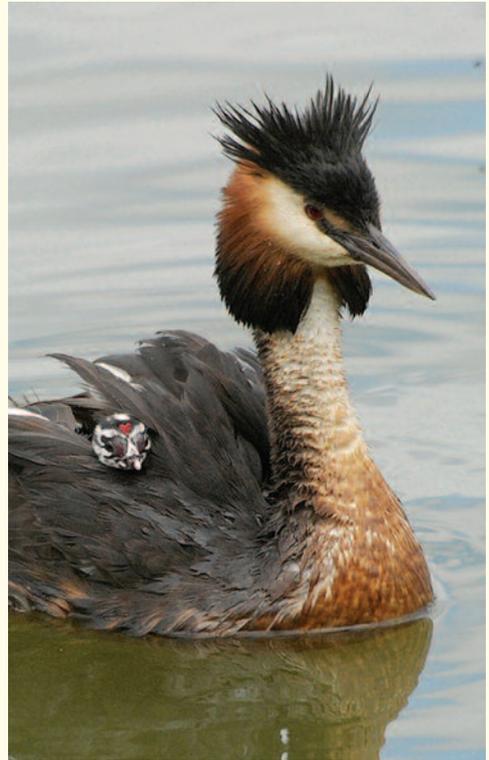


Plate 283. Adult Great Crested Grebe carrying small chick, Hogganfield Loch, Clyde, June 2016. © Lang Stewart



Plate 282. Great Crested Grebe on the nest with Tufted Duck young, Hogganfield Loch, Clyde, August 2016. © Jim Coyle

On 15 August 2016, one small chick hatched and thereafter the youngster has been seen riding on the back of one of the adults. It was never expected that the islands would be used by breeding birds this year. For them to be used by a pair of Great Crested Grebes within a few months of their installation is unbelievable and the Group is extremely proud of this achievement. The islands have proved to be popular with visitors to the park, have raised the profile of the Friends Group and the Local Nature Reserve and, most importantly, have proved popular with the birds.

Reference

Burgess, N.D. & Hirons, G.J.M. 1992. Creation and management of artificial nesting sites for wetland birds. *Journal of Environmental Management* 34: 285–295.

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