

BOGGART HOLE CLOUGH COMMUNITY ACTION TRUST

Protecting and revitalizing Boggart Hole Clough Ancient Woodland Park

Report by Conservation Volunteers looking after Boggart Hole Clough Local Nature Reserve

Canada geese population management 2009

BHC: Boggart Hole Clough. **BHCCAT:** Boggart Hole Clough Community Action Trust. **MCC:** Manchester City Council.

BHCCAT works in partnership with, among other individuals & organizations, MCC the landowner of BHC.

See BHCCAT website for asterisked* documents referenced below. Copies of other referenced documents available upon request.



9.6.2007.

Canada geese & goslings on promenade near Boathouse Café. Thanks to Paul McCrystal for this photo.



23.6.2009.

Unhatched Canada geese eggs bagged for disposal. See item **10** below.



7.7.2009.

Some Canada geese but no goslings on promenade near Boathouse Café.



23.8.2009.

Canada geese deserted promenade on this occasion for other areas of Lake.

Items **1 – 10:** Chronology. Items **11 – 13:** Conclusions.

1. BHCCAT Management Committee Meeting 18.9.2002 (Minutes dated 20.11.2002). First BHCCAT meeting at which Canada geese population mentioned as presenting a problem.
2. Canada geese breeding colony on the Island visited 25.4.2003 by 2 BHCCAT Conservation Volunteers. Canada geese eggs oiled with liquid paraffin BP to prevent hatching. Procedure licensed by DEFRA (Dept. Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) & authorized in writing by MCC. Aim: to reduce Canada geese numbers because they pose public health & safety risk caused by their droppings on Lake promenade and conservation risk to other aquatic birds caused by their monopolization of Lake. See Minutes (dated 27.8.2003) BHCCAT 21.5.2003 AGM.
3. BHCCAT Conservation Volunteers 4.1.2004 begin weekly Waterbirds Survey*. Ongoing survey enabling accurate measurement of biodiversity health / conservation value of the Lake & Island in terms of variety of bird species, and their numbers, supported by this habitat, and proper assessment of effectiveness of measures undertaken to reduce excessive Canada geese numbers (see item **11** below).
4. Island visited 24.4.2004 by 2 BHCCAT Conservation Volunteers. For 2nd consecutive year Canada geese eggs oiled with liquid paraffin BP to prevent hatching. Procedure licensed by DEFRA, authorized in writing by MCC. See Minutes (dated 30.6.2004) BHCCAT Executive Committee 28.4.2004 Open Meeting*. Eggs management procedure not repeated again until 2009.
5. BHC Biodiversity Management Plan (Ecology Services UK Ltd, 29.6.2007)* approved by BHCCAT & MCC: "...controlling Canada Geese which are considered an invasive non-native species, they are still breeding on the site as seen during the field study..." (page 22).
6. Natural England 'Technical Information Note TIN009' dated 2.11.2007: "The management of problems caused by Canada geese: a guide to best practice... Population management... Eggs may be coated with... liquid paraffin (BP)... this technique is... 100% effective in preventing hatching and does not adversely affect the sitting bird... humane and effective in preventing additional young birds being recruited to the population..."
7. MCC 16.1.2008 designates BHC a Local Nature Reserve. 'Local Nature Reserves: places for people & wildlife' (English Nature, 2004): "Local Nature Reserves should be... capable of being managed primarily for nature conservation..."
8. BHCCAT 'Lake & Island biodiversity health proposals' review dated 16.6.2008*. Review supports various measures to control Canada geese numbers, including eggs management, in preference to e.g. proposed fence around the Island which would likely damage / destroy nesting sites of Coots, Great Crested Grebes & Moorhens which nest on Island trees overhanging into the Lake.

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9. BHCCAT Executive Committee 15.10.2008 Open Meeting (Minutes dated 11.3.2009*). Meeting supports 3 measures to reduce excessive Canada geese numbers: improving signage requesting people not to feed the Lake birds (more, bigger, simpler signs), planting vegetation in & around Lake disagreeable to Canada geese (in terms of edibility, feeling of safety, etc), and managing Canada geese eggs.

10. Canada geese eggs management 2009.

10.1 Natural England licence dated 31.12.2008: "Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981... Licence to kill or take certain birds to preserve public safety or public health... permits authorised persons... to carry out a range of activities against birds of the species listed... to take or destroy their eggs... Greater Canada Goose... licence is valid... from 1.1.2009 to 31.12.2009... Wildlife Licensing Unit..."

10.2 MCC letter dated 31.3.2009 from Kylie Ward (MCC North Area Parks Manager), signed on her behalf by Saul Mearns (MCC North Area Parks Warden), to Natural England Wildlife Licensing Unit, Bristol, authorizing 3 BHCCAT Conservation Volunteers (Paul McCrystal, Steve Hamilton, Peter Milner) to oil Canada geese eggs with liquid paraffin BP to prevent hatching.

10.3 Island visited 15.4.2009 by Paul, Steve & Peter. 142 Canada geese eggs from 30 nests oiled with liquid paraffin BP/PhEur.

10.4 Island visited 2nd time 29.4.2009 by Steve & Peter. A further 105 eggs oiled. In total, during the 2 visits, 247 Canada geese eggs from 52 nests (including nest under bushes between Lake & Fish Pond) oiled. 33 eggs, in 6 nests, not oiled as Canada geese refused to move away from these nests. Total number of eggs (oiled & not oiled): 280.

10.5 Island visited 3rd time 23.6.2009 by Steve & Peter. All Canada geese nests abandoned. Collect 187 unhatched eggs, to avoid attracting vermin, in bin bags. Bags disposed of by Saul.

11. BHCCAT Waterbirds Survey (see item **3** above) covering 6 full years suggests Canada geese numbers have peaked. The Survey's results re Canada geese are set out in the table below. Optimum numbers over the 6 years typed in **bold**.

Canada geese counted between 10 a.m. and 10.30 a.m. every Saturday					
Years	Adults MAXIMUM	Goslings MAXIMUM	MAXIMUM	MINIMUM	TOTAL ÷ WEEKLY COUNTS = AVERAGE
2004	116	10	116	4	2,444 ÷ 50 = 49
2005	162	5	162	14	2,913 ÷ 50 = 58
2006	200	7	200	8	3,901 ÷ 52 = 75
2007	222	22	222	9	3,741 ÷ 52 = 72
2008	194	45	213	4	3,767 ÷ 52 = 72
2009	202	12	203	1	2,835 ÷ 52 = 55
2004-9 AVERAGE	183	17	186	7	19,601 ÷ 308 = 64

12. Re the 3 measures agreed (item **9** above). Firstly, feeding the Lake birds is considered the main cause of the Canada geese problem therefore signage requesting people not to feed the Lake birds is seen as the main solution; signage not yet improved. Secondly, planting vegetation in & around Lake disagreeable to Canada geese; this measure not yet begun. Thirdly, BHCCAT Conservation Volunteers intend repeating the same eggs management procedure (item **10** above) every year for as many years as necessary to help reduce Canada geese numbers to acceptable levels. Whilst these measures are initially aimed at preserving public health & safety, they (along with other measures, see item **8** above) are also aimed at restoring the biodiversity health of the Lake & Island by e.g. enhancing this habitat to support naturally sustainable thriving populations of various indigenous waterbird species.

13. Restoring the biodiversity health of the Lake & Island requires good conservation practice. The Island is presently a heronry; herons are particularly vulnerable to human disturbance. Mallards also nest there. Coots & Moorhens nest on Island trees overhanging into the Lake. In past recent years Great Crested Grebe (04, 06, 07) & Swans (04, 05, 06) have nested & bred there. The Canada geese eggs management procedure must necessarily be carried out during the nesting season. Every care is taken to minimize disturbance to other nesting birds particularly the herons. Any other conservation work required on the Island will be carried out if possible during November to January, outside the heron nesting season (February to October).

Thanks to everyone involved for their cooperation & support including:



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