



## **Chairperson's Report - Annual General Meeting, 25 September 2014**

It is with pleasure I present this fifth annual report of the Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Trust for the year ending

31st June 2014.

The Trust has experienced mixed fortunes over the last 12 months; it has had two distinct halves. The first six months held a number of challenges for Trustees to sort through, with one significant matter being ongoing delays around funding. An impact of this at the time was the Trust's inability to retain our then Project Manager, Rik Wilson.

The Trust is extremely grateful to Rik for his all his efforts and his success in getting the Possum project off the ground through the preceding years. I don't believe the project would be as advanced as it is today if it wasn't for Rik's extensive knowledge and his dedication to the role.

The latter six months of the year involved a change in fortunes for the Trust with the confirmation of new funding for a Project Manager and the securing of co-funding for "on the ground" operations. This enabled the Trust to focus on the task at hand for Sectors 1, 2 and 3; and to also look ahead to a new phase in the project.

The relief in finally securing funding for the Project Manager position allowed the Trust to advertise for a Project Manager.

I was very impressed by the calibre of applications received, which is a reflection I believe of the high regard in which our collective project is held. It was with great pleasure, that in March of this year, we were able to appoint Cathy Rufaut as our new Project Manager.

Cathy has had a very busy introduction to the role, which she has handled professionally and with great enthusiasm. Key areas of focus have included mop up operations in Sectors 1, 2 and 3; and the ongoing submission of funding applications. Trustees are very pleased with progress to date and are thrilled to have Cathy on board.

This year has also seen some changes in the makeup of our Board of Trustees, which includes the resignations of Neville Peat and Edward Ellison. Both Neville and Edward have been involved with the project from its inception back in 2008. Their contributions have been invaluable, assisting the project through its humble beginnings to our present day achievements. On behalf of Trustees, past and present, I wish to thank Neville and Edward for their vast knowledge and the valuable time that they have both contributed to the project.

I would also like to acknowledge the general hard work of Trustees over the past year, who, during the period when we had no appointed Project Manager, stepped up and committed additional time to ensure the project retained momentum.

Funding is always going to be an ongoing challenge with a project such as our's and this year was no exception. With Lotteries funding confirmed for two thirds of the project, it was very pleasing to secure co-funding for the mop-up operation in Sectors 1, 2 and 3. It was especially pleasing to receive the ongoing support within our local community from the Peninsula Community Board, Dunedin City Council Biodiversity Fund and the Speights Environment Fund.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Bendigo Valley Sports & Charity Foundation; Ian Turnbull; John Parker; Rod Morris & Peter Hayden; Larnach Castle, the Sargood Bequest and an anonymous donor, who generously made donations during the past year. Our work would be unable to continue without the on-going support of such funders.

As I have said in previous years, I would again like to acknowledge the support we have received from Peninsula land owners. Our project would not exist without their willingness to provide continued access to their property. On behalf of Trustees, I thank you for your assistance and confidence in our work.

As many of you will know, behind the scenes, we have a significant amount of effort being undertaken by volunteers. This work is of considerable value, and increasingly more so as the project progresses. Tasks undertaken by dedicated volunteers have included monitoring 22 one km Bird Monitoring transects; 14 Vegetation Monitoring sites; and 10 Rat Monitoring lines.

Many volunteers have assisting us over many years and I would particularly like to make a special mention of the tremendous effort of one in particular, Sharyn Broni who is collating the bird monitoring data - thank you Sharyn for your continued involvement.

As the project progresses, the reporting and monitoring of possum sightings is also becoming more and more important. Brenda Cameron has done a wonderful job coordinating and reporting these sightings – a warm thanks goes out to you also Brenda.

The Trust is holding firm to its vision of a pest free the Peninsula, clear that the desired outcomes will only be achieved working with and alongside a supportive community. On the basis of the immense support we have had from the community to date, I'm given confidence our lofty and long term goal may well come to fruition and benefit future generations of Peninsula residents.

Thank you.

**Brendon Cross**

**Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Trust Chairperson**