



PEST FREE PENINSULA NEWSLETTER

The latest updates from Winter 2014

As the first day of Spring arrives, the OPBG can take a breath after a very busy July-August to write this second newsletter of the year.

More Funds for Sector 4

We are thrilled to announce that the Department of Conservation has backed our return to Sector 4 (Portobello through to Vauxhall/Shiel Hill) by fully funding the first mop-up control operation, after an initial possum knockdown in 2012. The OPBG has been allocated a Community Conservation Partnership Fund (CCPF) grant. We'd like to acknowledge Mike Morrison and John Barkla in particular for their support role in this.

The work will include community trapping around the residential areas, re-working the farmland, and establishing a permanent buffer line along the edge of city suburbs to stem reinvasion back onto cleared Peninsula lands. Work is scheduled to start at the end of this year or early 2015.

Sector 1-3 second mop-up

The second mop-up of possums in Sectors 1-3 started in July this year. This was the third large-scale operation conducted on the outer Peninsula; the initial knockdown was done in 2011 followed by a first mop-up in 2012. This year's control work spanned 8 weeks and 170 person days that started 1 July, used two hard-working contracting firms, followed by two weeks of monitors working 46 lines. The control work in some areas of Sector 1 and 2 was interrupted by lambing so we will need to return later in spring to continue checking for possums, e.g. the larger habitats of Okia and surrounds including Taiaroa Bush. The cliff areas around Cape Saunders also need some innovative re-working, there is an occasional possum that will not come up to the top to be caught.

The main difference in this year's operation was the use of non-toxic chew cards (white corflute plastic baited with a nutty lure) to help map the distribution of possums and target control efforts. We were very pleased with how the chew cards performed and will continue to use them in the future. In addition to the possums, they have provided us with some base-line information on some of the other pest species the OPBG would like to remove in the not too distant future, i.e. rodents, stoats, ferrets.

The table below shows that the number of possums caught during this second mop up is down in all three sectors on the last control operation 2 years ago (see Table 1 below). This indicates firstly that the work by the OPBG + community + contractors is making a significant dent on the Peninsula possum population and secondly, that control is remaining ahead of recruitment, i.e. the number of possums removed is not being replaced by reinvasions and breeding over time. Sector 2 contained a strongly biased capture area around Okia, with 70% of the possums killed this year in that location, which has sensitive wildlife and areas with little previous control work. In all other parts of Sector 2, the magnitude of possum reduction was similar to

that seen in Sectors 1 and 3.

If you do spot a possum or hear or see sign in Sectors 1-3, please contact us ASAP so we can respond rapidly. We need to stay on top of dispersing individuals and the next generation of joeys.

Table 1: Possum kills in Sectors 1-3 of Otago Peninsula (2011-2014) during three control operations.

Land Sector	Hectares	Possum Kills			
		2011	2012	2014	Totals
1- Cape Saunders	1539	321	80	34	435
2- Taiaroa Head	2230	2080	484	428*	2992
3- Clark's/ Sheppard's. Hill	400	350	51	16	417
Totals	4169	2751	615	478	3844

* See text above.

OPBG AGM

This year's AGM is to be held on **25 September at the Macandrew Bay Hall at 7.30 pm**. The usual formalities will occur, followed by supper and a good informal chat.

There will also be a presentation on where we're at with possum project and information about the up and coming control work in Sector 4.

***** Hope to see you there – Everybody is welcome *****

New Communications

We have completed a major upgrade of our website (www.pestfreepeninsula.org.nz) and will continue to add to it throughout the year.

We also have a new noticeboard space outside Virginia's Gallery in Portobello, as another means of communication with residents and visitors.

We have produced the first series of bumper stickers, targeted for Peninsula residents wishing to show their support for *a Pest-Free Peninsula*. You can pick one of these up for a gold coin donation at our AGM or email us: opbg11@gmail.com

Interested in helping out?

This is where we acknowledge the tremendous assistance and support of over 50 volunteer community members who help us work towards a pest-free peninsula and make it a better place to live. If you would like to also play a role, please contact us.

One of the best ways you can help is by allowing us access to your property to check for possums and being supportive in their capture.

Contacts

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