

March 2015 OPBG Newsletter

Working Towards a Pest-Free Peninsula since 2008



We're coming back into Sector 4 for 2015

The OPBG have secured more funding from the Department of Conservation to allow us to return this year to the Peninsula operation block known as Sector 4 (from Allans Beach Rd in Portobello back through to the city suburbs). This includes Portobello, Broad Bay, Macandrew Bay townships and all of the clusters of residences along Portobello Rd through to the farmland boundary adjacent to Vauxhall, Waverley, Shiel Hill, and Tomahawk (see the map on our other webpage).



When:

- * March/early April – trapping in suburbs will begin and continue throughout the year.
- * May/June – poisoning and trapping in farmland and reserves will begin for a 6 week period.

What you can do:

- * allow us onto your property to check for possum presence.
- * run a trap on your property with our help.
- * become one of our urban coordinators to oversee trap use in your/neighbouring streets.

Look out for:

- * possum sign in your garden (calls, poos and fur).
- * notices advising of our public meetings and trapping workshops.

SEEN A POSSUM?

Contact us at opbg11@gmail.com or
Brenda Cameron at brenda.wayne@xtra.co.nz

A good supply of apples is needed

Apples are one of our most used baits for operating possum traps. If you have a tree with extra fruit available, please contact us.

Two More Trustees

The OPBG Board of Trustees has elected two new members this year, Dave Chalmers from Macandrew Bay and Bev Dickson from Portobello. Dave and Bev are both interested in the operational side of the OPBG and offer skills that yet again increase our strategising power. Welcome Dave and Bev!

We also welcome a new ground team member



Bruce Kyle has been appointed our main contractor to implement the community trapping programme in Sector 4, over the next six months. You may have seen Bruce around already, he has been assisting the OPBG on and off since possum control work started in 2011. He is also responsible for encircling our Sector 3 buffer with yellow Timms traps and white chew cards in a protection system to stem possum reinvasion. Sadly, 7 of our roadside Timms traps have

gone missing and we can only hope that they're being put to good use somewhere else on the Peninsula.

Places that can hide those pesky possums

As you know, we have been working hard to the north and east of Portobello in Sectors 1-3 since June last year. Our contractors and volunteers have done a great job whittling down the number of surviving possums over this 4000ha area. An additional 650 have been caught to date. There are still 3 'hotspots' left around the northern end of the Peninsula, that house multiple possums, and need our close attention for 2015. Over the rest of the land, we are down to hunting individuals. Some have been located in the high cliffs and narrow rock ledges around Cape Saunders, as this photo shows. Residual possums in places where there are few



plants and so exposed that you can't stand up in a southerly. However, thanks to the climbing skills of Bruce Kyle and Johnny Monachan and logistical support from DoC, **9 more** possums were picked up from inhospitable Cape habitat.

Bring in the indicator dogs

Dogs are an incredibly valuable tool in animal pest removal campaigns. Councils and DoC use them all the time for their island eradication and protection work, AHB

contractors use them to gauge how effective their control methods have been, residents use them to catch possums from around their houses. Late last year, we brought a pair of trained indicator dogs and their handlers into a 47ha bush block that has been part of the 2011-2014 possum control programme, as a trial. After 3 hours, they found nothing, a true celebration for the hardworking, anti-pest landowners. Increasingly, the OPBG will be looking to use dogs in their operational blocks, as the possum numbers drop down to very low numbers. Dogs will become our most efficient and effective detection tool towards the end of the possum removal campaign.

Website updates

Our website (www.pestfreepeninsula.org.nz) is being regularly updated, particularly the "What's On?" page and Photo Gallery, as we look for ways of increasing contact and supplying information to community members. There is also space for people to post comments so you can talk to us as well. An OPBG Facebook page will be added in the near future, linked to our website. We are also drafting up a web-based "Donations Page" to assist with funding our ongoing work. *Thank you to our kind volunteer, Katherine, for helping us keep our website site interesting and topical.*

Some final comments on the next species

You may have heard that the OPBG is moving onto other animal pest species. It is indeed true that we are beginning to discuss and get advice on how to target rodents, mustelids, and key prey species, on the Otago Peninsula. However, actual control work on these species is still at least 2 years away. We therefore do not have the capacity to respond to requests for trapping rodents or stoats or ferrets but we are very interested in recording your sightings of these animals, to help build up a distribution map.

Household Tip

Autumn is a time for mating in possums, leading to a lot of movement as males seek out females. It is also the time for maturity in fruit and nut trees, a sought after and targeted food source for any possum. So, set your traps under or near these trees, until the produce has fallen. The next seasonal resource to focus on for trapping is winter shelter, especially old macrocarpa trees, gorse, and sheds/garages.

All the best and thank you for your support,

Brendon Cross

OPBG Chair