

OPBG Newsletter December 2016

Working Towards a Pest-Free Peninsula since 2008



Message from the Chair

This year saw a few changes on the OPBG Board of Trustees. Brendon Cross our Chairman for the past four years stood down from this position. Brendon is a founding member of OPBG and has worked tirelessly to further our vision of a pest-free Peninsula. We are grateful that he will continue to serve as a trustee.

Matthew Anderson (Trustee since 2012) resigned from the Board and Brian Templeton and Marita Eisenlohr joined the Board as new Trustees.

2016 was a busy and successful year and reaching the 10,000 possums milestone is the result of five years of hard work by many members of our Peninsula community. OPBG is grateful to the large number of rural and residential landowners who allow access to their properties for possum control activities by our operational staff and volunteer community trappers, and to those landowners who undertake possum control activities themselves. The success of our possum control program is dependent on the continued good will of the Peninsula community.

I would like to thank the trustees for keeping the wheels of OPBG turning this year, both in terms of their governance role and also the many practical duties they have undertaken. We are a small organization with an ambitious vision and need to work well together.

To the OPBG community, may I wish you all a joyful festive season and relaxing summer with family and friends.

David Chalmers, Chairman

Backyard Biodiversity

The project is coming to a conclusion now with most schools having completed their final monitoring week. The children put a lot of effort into a series of impressive poster presentations that were on display at the Otago Museum last month. The results from all their observations were entered into a database set up by Dragonfly Data Science and can be accessed with this link:

<https://www.dragonfly.co.nz/news/2016-11-25-backyard-biodiversity.html>

Ministerial visit

A mid-November Friday was a bit of a cool, drizzly day on the Peninsula, but it was great to have the opportunity to show the **Hon.**

Michael Woodhouse the hard work being carried out by our team, volunteers, and residents in monitoring and trapping. We shared some of our achievements to date and how our future plans are a valuable contribution to a Predator Free New Zealand for future generations. Thank you to Michael Woodhouse and Sue O'Connell for braving the weather and visiting us, and thank you to our amazing team, volunteers, and residents who are doing such a great job!



Checking out the Peninsula Lizards

A wonderful team of dedicated OPBG volunteers carry out valuable monitoring all over the Peninsula to measure the effects of possum removal on the Peninsula environment. They record bird counts, use tracking tunnels to discover small mammal numbers, and check out changes in vegetation. This year lizard monitoring has been added to the list! Dunedin-based herpetologist, Carey Knox of Knox Ecology, has recently completed baseline data collection of current lizard numbers so we can identify any future changes in Peninsula lizard populations.

In October, Carey checked 90 lizard shelters every day for seven days in different locations along the Peninsula. By the end of the week he had recorded over 900 lizards, including 751 Southern grass skinks, 114 korero geckos, and 48 cryptic skinks. Carey even discovered a new population of cryptic skinks bringing the total number of known populations on the Peninsula to three.

Photos and information courtesy of herpetologist Carey Knox, Knox Ecology

<http://www.knoxecology.co.nz/>



Southern grass skink (*Oligosoma polychrome*)

Appearance: Total length up to 16 cm, but commonly smaller. Usually straw brown or darker brown with numerous smooth-edged stripes on the back and sides. Stripes are varying shades of brown. Belly grey/brown to bright yellow and unmarked or lightly speckled.

Korero gecko (*Woodworthia* sp.).

Appearance: Total length around 16 cm. Upper surfaces grey, olive-grey or dark pinkish-brown. Paler bands, blotches or stripes form intricate patterns on the back, head and tail. Lower surfaces lighter and speckled. Animals rarely have bold stripes on back.



Cryptic skink (*Oligosoma inconspicuum*)

Appearance: Total length up to 15 cm. Upper (dorsal) surfaces: back pale reddish brown or chestnut brown through to very dark brown with or without a dark brown mid-dorsal stripe (may be continuous or broken). Sometimes black flecking on back.

Keep an eye out for more information from Carey's report on our website www.pestfreepeninsula.org.nz

Residents survey 2015

The results from our 2015 Residents Survey are finally available on our website:

http://www.pestfreepeninsula.org.nz/?page_id=1239

Rural Delivery

Hopefully many of you would have been able to watch Episode 39 of TV One's Rural Delivery program, which was filmed in September and broadcast at the end of November.

A great presentation of OPBG's work towards a predator free Peninsula, including interviews with Brendon and Moira.

<http://www.ruraldelivery.net.nz/2016/11/a-predator-free-peninsula/>

Meet our Volunteers

Mike Lawson

Volunteer Mike Lawson and his family moved to Dunedin from the UK in 2001. They soon fell in love with the Peninsula and chose to settle in Macandrew Bay.

It didn't take Mike long to realise the devastating effect introduced species have had on our native fauna. A keen trumper & birdwatcher, one of the first things that struck him was how eerily quiet our forests are compared to those in Europe and other parts of the world.

A chance encounter with volunteers from Friends of Flora, whilst tramping in Kahurangi National Park, inspired Mike and helped him appreciate how much can be achieved by committed community groups. The increased number of tui and bellbirds in his own garden and those of his neighbours is, he feels, testament to what has been achieved so far by OPBG.



Louise Ashton

Louise lives in Macandrew Bay, and has been a volunteer for OPBG for nearly two years. Louise works at the Native Plant Nursery for Yellow-Eyed Penguin Trust, in McTaggart St.

She looks after the Buffer Zone trap line from Weir Rd around to Allen's Beach Rd. Only 7 possums were caught in the past 18 months, which shows how good a job she is doing; there are fewer possums around.


After 20 years working in hospitals as a radiographer, it is wonderful to get outside and contribute to something much bigger than yourself. Formerly an animal hugger to all creatures, she

now wants to buy a gun and shoot rabbits eating the nursery plants, as well as any possums staying in the cross hairs!

OTAGO PENINSULA
BIODIVERSITY
GROUP

FUNDRAISING CALENDAR 2017

Superb photos that capture Peninsula landscapes and wildlife
ALL PROCEEDS WILL GO TOWARDS MAKING THE PENINSULA POSSUM FREE



Available on the Peninsula from:

- Macandrew Bay Pharmacy
- Bellamy's Gallery
- Macandrew Bay Store
- Portobello Store
- Penguin Café, Portobello
- Happy Hens, Portobello
- Albatross Colony, Taiaroa Heads

Also available at: the DoC Visitor Centre,
Dunedin iSite in The Octagon

Price: \$20 each

WORKING TOWARDS A PEST-FREE PENINSULA

Our OPBG Calendars are still available at the Peninsula outlets and online, so please get yours before they run out. They make great Christmas presents and are easy to send away.

A couple of messages from Project Manager Sarah:

There are a good number of traps hard at work with our community members. If you have had an OPBG trap for a year or longer, it's now time for us to give it a bit of a service to make sure it's still functioning well. Please give Sarah a call and we will arrange to pick it up - Ph. 021 263 0566 or email: opbg11@gmail.com.

'The OPBG uses a storage container to store traps and monitoring equipment. It would be great if we could find shelving for the container to keep everything tidy and off the floor. If you have some extra shelving that you don't need, the OPBG would very much appreciate the donation. Please contact Sarah on 021 263 0566 or email: opbg11@gmail.com'

Possum statistics for 2016

Nov 2016 – 28 (Community traps, road kills, etc)

18 (Operational mostly Timms trapping low density areas in Sec 1 and 2)

Year Total to the end of November - 1429 possums (community and operational)

Grand Total at the end of November - 11,010 possums (community and operational)

And another message from Operations Manager Bruce to everybody in our community:

It is really important to continue reporting any possums that you encounter, catch, kill or see on the road, dead or alive. Brenda Cameron is collecting all this information and you can find her email in the box below.

NEED TO REPORT A POSSUM DEAD OR ALIVE?

**Contact Brenda Cameron at:
brenda.wayne@xtra.co.nz**

We would like to wish everybody a wonderful Christmas and a good start to the New Year!

