

# OPBG Newsletter December 2017

*Working Towards a Pest-Free Peninsula since 2008*



## Message from the Chair

This year saw a few adjustments on the OPBG Board of Trustees:

David Chalmers our Chairman over the past year has stood down from this position after contributing a very solid year of governance and guidance.

Both David and previous Chairman Brendon continue as Subcommittee chairs, working tirelessly to further our vision of a pest-free Peninsula. We are very grateful to both of them for their considerable talent and support as trustees.

Moira Parker, a founding member of OPBG resigned from the Board this year. Fortunately Moira is not lost to us - she is devoting her time to practical work in the field and with volunteers. We all thank Moira for her heroic effort both as a trustee and as a volunteer over many years now. We are in the process of considering several potential new trustees to the Board.

2017 saw our financial situation consolidate considerably due in no small part to the efforts of a strong finance committee, ably supported by our vigilant Project Manager at the time Sarah Irvine. Unfortunately Sarah has since relocated further south, and we were very sorry to see her go. We welcomed Ursula Ellenberg as our new Project Manager in July/August and she has wasted little time in becoming fully emersed in the job, and in what has been another busy and successful year. We have now removed 14,000 possums - a great new milestone, and the result of six years hard work by many members of the Peninsula community. Our trust is very grateful to the large number of rural and residential landowners who continue to allow access onto their properties for possum control work by staff and by volunteer trappers. We are also extremely grateful to all landowners who undertake possum control on their own properties. Our possum control program can only work with the continuation of this wonderful community support and good will.

I would like to thank all trustees for their hard work this year and for the individual skills and strengths they have brought to the group. We are a small organization, but we make a great team. If we can continue to support each other as we have over the past year, the pest-free vision will grow and inspire other communities around the Harbour to undertake their own campaigns.

*To the OPBG community, may I thank you all for your enthusiasm and pioneering effort, and wish you all a great Christmas, a relaxing summer, and a peaceful year ahead.*

*Rod Morris, Chairman*



## Predator Free 2050

Expressions of interest for major pest control funding were invited by Predator Free 2050 Ltd and OPBG was able to host Ed Chignell, CEO for a visit to the Peninsula to showcase our project and discuss current and future work. The Predator Free Dunedin group has now been selected to submit a detailed proposal and work program for the next round.

(CEO Ed Chignell here with Operations Manager Bruce Kyle and Trustee and former Chair Dave Chalmers)

## Ministerial Visit and Funding Announcement

Last week OPBG and several other community groups were given the results from the current round of the DOC Biodiversity Fund applications and OPBG was successful in receiving a \$100,000 grant. This is greatly appreciated and will ensure the ongoing possum control work on the Peninsula and the resulting improvement of our biodiversity. Credit needs to go to our past Chair Dave Chalmers and former Project Manager Sarah Irvine for this fantastic achievement, they were instrumental in putting the application together that resulted in this grant.

The Minister for Conservation, the Hon Eugenie Sage did not miss the opportunity to come to Dunedin and

announce the grant. This event took place in the beautiful Glenfalloch restaurant and was followed by a short field trip up to Peggy's Hill with its stunning Peninsula panorama.



OPBG past and present Chairs Brendon Cross and Rod Morris with the Hon Eugenie Sage

## OPBG Operations Update

The winter possum control operation has been completed for the year, with over 1500 possums removed since April, and 14,000 now removed since 2011. Over the last six weeks we have monitored most of our 'hotspot' areas to see how things look. Nine of the 15 areas were below 5% RTC, which is where we want them. Sandymount is around 6%, which is great for such a large, difficult area, and the Cove area continues to be a trouble spot at 6-7%. The real problem areas continue to be the coastal blocks - Sandfly Bay, Boulder Beach and, less so, Taiaroa Bush. Sector 1 (Cape Saunders) looks extremely good, although possums do turn up at Allans Beach now and then.

The rural and residential areas still require plenty of vigilance as possums continue to disperse from the coastal breeding zones. Our volunteer trappers and chew carders do a magnificent job trying to stem the movement, but we always need help from folk who are able to trap those quiet, scrubby corners and trees on their properties, or who can call us when they hear or see possums.

The good news stories continue to come in from people who are seeing more bush and more birds. That is the real goal for this program, not simply fewer possums. 2018 is going to be a critical year for us as we aim to reduce numbers to 1% in most areas. The rest of the country is watching, aware that community involvement is a large part of the program's success to date. I would like to personally thank the OP community for their active involvement, encouragement and local knowledge in assisting our people on the ground. Those roadside chats are strategically valuable and good for the soul!

Here's to a happy festive season; hang loose and recharge the batteries. Thanks again to our wonderful volunteers - we could not achieve what we have without you! Let's make 2018 a year to remember. Cheers Bruce



View North from the Sandymount car park

### Sector 5 – Urban Buffer Zone

Preliminary work in the Waverley/Vauxhall area (Sector 5) began with a household survey carried out by Frances Hernandez, a University of Otago Masters student, ably assisted by our volunteers Barbara Smith and Karina Kelly. Frances was delighted with the great response from residents. All who participated and returned the questionnaire will be in the draw for a “High Tea and Garden” voucher generously donated by Norcombe Barker from Larnach Castle. We anticipate that this will be drawn in February. The revised timeline for further work will see us distributing our new OPBG brochures in February along with an invite to the first of our public meetings in Feb/March when people can learn about our work and raise their concerns. The support of residents for our project is vital and will guide our future activities. The public information meetings will be followed by our trapping workshop in conjunction with the “Wild Dunedin” festival in April. Watch this space...details to follow!



OPBG Project Manager Ursula Ellenberg with Frances and Castle Director Norcombe Barker presenting the voucher

## Bird Call Workshop

Rod Morris, our new chairman, together with Sally Carson and Tessa Mills from the Marine Studies Centre, held a Bird Call workshop, attended by a host of OPBG bird monitoring volunteers and quite a few other bird enthusiasts. The Marine Studies Centre was a great location and the participants declared it a great success. The workshop ended with a quiz, which proved quite an interesting experience for most of us. Marcia Dale, a local artist and keen bird monitor herself,



generously donated one of her paintings of a kākāpō to the winner of the quiz. This went to the only perfect score of 20/20 from Adrienne Mulqueen. Congratulations!

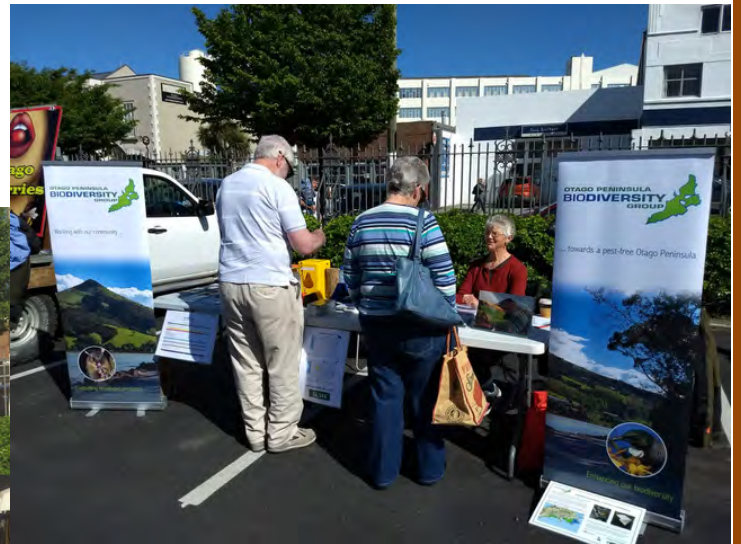


## OPBG Community Events

With the new 2018 calendar on sale for the past few months, we had a few good opportunities to engage with our community and have our calendars for sale as well: The Otago Peninsula Trust 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Day was held in October at the beautiful Glenfalloch Gardens. It proved to be quite a busy afternoon with the stall being well attended; there were lots of great conversations with visitors.



In November we held the community stall at the weekly Otago Farmers Market at the Dunedin railway station. The Farmers Market is always a great place to spend a Saturday morning, and it was well worth it!



## Meet our Volunteers

### Moira Parker

Moira Parker is one of OPBG's founding Trustees and has been the heart and soul of the Group for many years. She was a signatory on the Deed that established the Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Trust in 2010 and has served as a Trustee and its Secretary since then. During that time Moira worked tirelessly in many different roles: she maintained the records of the Trust, prepared funding applications, wrote submissions to local government authorities, represented the Trust at hearings, liaised with other community groups, and spent many hours promoting the Group's activities at community events.



Quite a CV! But, alas, there comes a time for change and Moira has decided that her energy and dedication should focus on the nitty gritty work in tracking down those last pesky possums and helping Bruce in the field. As possum numbers decline, the effort and difficulty in catching the remaining animals increases. A concerted effort towards specific areas such as

during our recent winter operations will lead to great results. But it is important not to neglect the wider environment, and Moira feels, that with the help of our volunteers, she can make a greater contribution by looking after the areas where chew cards have indicated that there is a possum incursion that needs dealing with.

She remains very much involved with our goals and our work in trying to achieve a possum free Peninsula and to that end still serves on our Operations Committee.

The Trust is sorry to see her leave the Board, but happy that she remains in her capacity as one of our many valuable operations volunteers.

Moira for her part is delighted that Marita will be our new and highly effective secretary. (Marita, however, is still trying hard to fill those gumboots and hopes she will do it justice.)

Some of the things Moira enjoys most, out and about with the hedge clippers and in overalls with husband John, staunch supporter and fellow track clearer, and Ops Manager Bruce (left) or instructing young volunteers in the art of setting Timms traps (right)



And occasionally there is even time to relax and socialise...  
At our volunteers BBQ last February (left)



With OPBG Chair Rod Morris and Project Manager Ursula Ellenberg at Glenfalloch Restaurant for the Ministerial visit last week

### Call for Volunteers

Summer has arrived and our big winter operation is well and truly winding up. Our hard working team of Operations Manager Bruce Kyle and assistants Frank Pepers and Sol Wogan plus the guys from DM Holdings persevered through very tough conditions over the winter months and took out over 1000 possums from the Sandymount and Sandfly Bay areas.

Now that the focus has to return to other areas, Bruce is concerned that the network of access tracks that were established to set up bait stations and traps will disappear again under blackberry, bracken and Muehlenbeckia vines.

***We are looking for 1 or 2 or more local volunteers, who would be willing to dedicate approx. ½ day per fortnight to help maintain the tracks and keep them clear from encroaching vegetation.***

If this is a project you would consider please contact us: [opbg11@gmail.com](mailto:opbg11@gmail.com)

### A Message to our Community:

Could you please check whether you still have an OPBG trap sitting somewhere and if it is not in use, please contact us on [opbg11@gmail.com](mailto:opbg11@gmail.com) and let us know, so that we can set it elsewhere.

***We would like to encourage you to send us your feedback on what you are observing in your backyards. Are you hearing more bird song? Are your roses blooming again and do you get to eat the fruit from your trees again instead of the possums munching away? All these anecdotal recordings are valuable information for us and help us with our planning.***

***One of our residents in the Sandymount area recently reported that he has been hearing frogs again, for the first time in years!***

We are also inviting you to make use of our trap library. If you think there is a possum lurking somewhere or you want to control some rats or stoats, please drop us a line on [opbg11@gmail.com](mailto:opbg11@gmail.com) and somebody will contact you.

### NEED TO REPORT A POSSUM DEAD OR ALIVE?

**Contact Brenda Cameron at:  
[brenda.wayne@xtra.co.nz](mailto:brenda.wayne@xtra.co.nz)**

