

OPBG Newsletter July 2017

Working Towards a Pest-Free Peninsula since 2008



In the Community

It has been a very busy time for Project Manager Sarah and our Trustees at various Community information stalls:

April saw the **Festival at Glenfalloch Gardens** with about 60 groups passing through and many local families that were given chew cards and information. The **Urban Nature Expo** was part of this year's **Wild Dunedin Festival** and attracted a crowd



of close to 900 people taking part in the Town Belt Traverse. People of all age groups showed a keen interest in OPBG's stall.



In May a group from different organizations that included ORC, DCC, Zealandia, University Science Communications Program, Landcare, Enviro schools and STOP, joined Sarah and Dave on a tour and presentation out to the

Peninsula. There was also a meeting at Macandrew Bay School with an opportunity for the children to present the Backyard Biodiversity program that was running last year.

In May we also had the good fortune to have **Peter Garden** giving a very informative talk at Macandrew Bay and despite the tempting good weather outside had a good turn out of people. Peter Garden is a recipient of the NZ Order of Merit in Aviation and Conservation and is an expert in aerial habitat restoration and as a helicopter pilot has taken part in many conservation projects worldwide. A big thank you to Peter for donating all proceeds to OPBG.



Our latest community event of course was the **Trapping Workshop** held in June at the Macandrew Bay Hall. It was a hands on demonstration of traps being used by the group at the moment and we want to say a big thank you to our very experienced trapping volunteers and trustees who agreed to demonstrate on the day: *Louise Ashton and Chris Hewitt on Timms traps, John Aldis on possum masters, Bev Dickson on rat traps, John Parker on DOC200 stoat traps, Sol Wogan on live cage traps and leg holds and Olivia from Farmlands showing the new Goodnature A12s (possum) and A24s (rats and stoats). As an important detection tool, of course Moira Parker showed the use and effectiveness of chew cards.*



Great attendance and interest from the community with a number of new volunteers coming forward to help.

Well done to a great team effort, but especially to Sarah and Bruce for running the event so efficiently.



Changing of the Guard:

Sarah Irvine, our Project Manager, has unfortunately made the decision that she cannot remain with OPBG any longer as she has already moved her family away from Dunedin. We are extremely grateful that we have had Sarah with us. She brought great energy, enthusiasm and skill to the job and we would like to say a big Thank You to her. We will miss her and wish her well for her future plans. We certainly hope that she will continue her interest in our work.

So the search was on for Sarah's replacement as Project Manager and we have been able to attract **Ursula Ellenberg**, who is already transitioning into her new role and will take up the position from



August. She comes highly qualified and we would like to extend a warm welcome to her. Some of you may have met her at the trapping workshop. She really enjoyed getting to know and catching up with the many like-minded Peninsula people attending the workshop.

Ursula has recently returned from Melbourne where she has worked for several years as a lecturer in the Department of Ecology, Environment and Evolution at La Trobe University. She continues to be involved in the research and teaching both at La Trobe and at the University of Otago (check out www.tawaki-project.org).

Ursula and her family are glad to be back home in Dunedin where her kids were born and where she did her PhD on penguins. Much of her field research was based on the Otago Peninsula. Effective communication of management relevant research results has helped her earn the Young Scientist of the Year Award

(www.otago.ac.nz/research/hekitenga2008/penguinstress.html) and greatly improved visitor management around Yellow-eyed penguin breeding sites.

After having worked in Norway, Germany, Chile and Australia, Ursula has now settled back in the loveliest little city in the world (!) enjoying her cosy wooden villa and catching up with friends and family. She is looking forward to putting her project management skills to good use and working together with the enthusiastic OPBG towards the ambitious goal of a pest-free and biodiverse Otago Peninsula conservation haven. – Great to have you on board!

Rodent monitoring report – Dr Deb Wilson



As part of the main possum control program OPBG Trustee Moira Parker (*see photo*) put in place a number of monitoring programs. This involved a series of programs checking the effects of removing possums from the Peninsula environment on its birds, lizards, vegetation, invertebrates and rodents. For the past 5 years a group of up to 27 volunteers spread out over the Peninsula four times a year to set out inked tracking cards in tunnels to check how much rodent activity took place during one night. This was later coordinated by Carol Tippet, who over the years filled quite a few roles within the group. **Dr Deb Wilson**, a

Landcare Research Scientist, has now completed the statistical analysis of all the data collected during the time and has found that there is NO detectable increase in the rat population in the more than 5 years since possum control commenced on the Peninsula. This is a great result and we would like to thank Deb Wilson, who is also a long standing volunteer, for her expert advice and support throughout this project. The data analysis and report were funded by a grant from the Otago Regional Council's Environmental Enhancement Fund and by core funding for Crown Research Institutes from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's Science and Innovation Group.

OPBG Winter Operations

The big 2017 Winter operation is about to get underway. The program will be focussing on Sector 4, and priority areas targeted will be possum habitat at Boulder Beach, Sandymount and Sandfly Bay. This project is now fully funded and we would like to acknowledge the following organizations for their generous grants:

Harry J. Wilson Fund	-	\$20,000
Dunedin Casino	-	\$15,000
ANZ Staff Foundation	-	\$7,022
Dept of Conservation	-	\$25,920
Lottery's Grants Board	-	\$50,000
DCC Biodiversity Fund	-	\$5,000



As part of the Winter operation a group of volunteers under the guidance of DoC Ranger **Shay Van Der Hurk** met up with OPBG Operations manager **Bruce Kyle** for some track clearing and setting up of a line of bait safe stations at Sandymount. They had a very productive day and managed to clear a trail of about 1.5km length, great effort and a big thank you.

Meet our Volunteers

Carol Tippet

I came to live on the Peninsula in 2010 with my partner Mike and our 2 children Phoebe and Felix. My first involvement with OPBG was as a trainee bird counter, a role I still carry out. It can be both rewarding and frustrating! Nothing so frustrating as not being able to identify a bird call, but nothing quite as exciting as zooming in with the binoculars and identifying a bird for the first time also. The walk around the Lovers Leap transact is one of the best on the Peninsula I believe.

About three years ago I decided I would like to contribute further and picked up the role of rodent monitoring co-coordinator.

This involved communicating with the volunteers who set tracking cards out one night every three months, watching the weather forecast to avoid overnight rain on tracking nights. My job then involved reading the tracking cards, which for me was the fun part, identifying footprints and sending the data on to Deb Wilson for analysis.

The great news is that this process has shown that the rat population has not significantly increased as a result of the removal of possums and so the program has now come to an end.

I was fortunate to hold a paid position for six months last year with OPBG as educator on the Backyard Biodiversity program in schools which was interesting and good fun and involved introducing concepts of biodiversity to the children.

Volunteering for OPBG is a good way for me to get out and enjoy the Peninsula, contribute to the pest free project and meet other residents involved.

We could not say it any better, thank you, Carol!



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 and let us know, so we can set it elsewhere.

We would also 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?

We are also encouraging 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 and somebody will contact you.

NEED TO REPORT A POSSUM DEAD OR ALIVE?

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