

OPBG Newsletter March 2017

Working Towards a Pest-Free Peninsula since 2008



Predator Free Dunedin

The signing ceremony for the Memorandum of Understanding by members of the newly formed Predator Free Dunedin partnership took place on Thursday 16th March at Orokonui Ecosanctuary in the presence of Prime Minister Bill English and Minister Maggie Barry. Over twenty organizations involved in predator control, research and regulation joined forces to develop an integrated predator management plan for the city.



Dave Chalmers, Sarah Irvine and Brendon Cross represented the Trust and Dave signed the MoU on behalf of OPBT.



A little field trip saw Minister Maggie Barry watching a demonstration of some new trap technology.



Volunteers BBQ at Hoopers Inlet Hall

A balmy afternoon in February saw us all coming together for a volunteers BBQ at Hoopers Inlet Hall. We met up with about 50 – 60 of our volunteers plus partners and family for a very enjoyable get together. Thank you to Bruce, Brendon and Ally for being the chefs of



the day and also providing all the protein. It was a successful afternoon and will certainly become an annual event.



ANZ Staff volunteers

A fabulous team of ANZ Staff volunteers from the Dunedin branch came out to the Peninsula again in late February/early March putting out chew cards at Okia, Allans Beach and Hoopers Inlet and then returning the following week to check and bring the cards back in. Altogether 27 volunteers were available, which were organized into two groups. Thank you!!



Portobello Blues Festival

OPBG set up an information stall this year at the Portobello Blues Festival and although it was a



rainy Sunday and everything had to move inside, it proved to be a worthwhile exercise on the Saturday with Sarah having plenty of opportunity to engage with people, 3 new volunteers have signed up and lots of people visited the stall.

Project Manager Sarah Irvine explaining possum bites to Dominik

OPBG stall inside Coronation Hall on Sunday (Trustees Moira and Marita holding the fort)



Funding Update

Harry J. Wilson Trust

OPBG would like to acknowledge the Harry J. Wilson Trust for the generous grant of \$20,000, which will cover a substantial part of our winter operations control program.

Otago Community Trust

We have now met our co-funding criteria for the OCT Grant of \$30,000 and can start planning towards the Sector 5 program.

Department of Conservation Community Fund

Confirmation was received in December that a grant of \$98,000 for 2017/2018 was approved for OPBG Project Management. Great news....

Meet our Volunteers

Chris Hewitt

In May 1978 my wife and I along with our three children came to New Zealand from England to live, I never looked back. On our very first weekend in Dunedin we had a picnic atop the sand dunes of Sandfly Bay, the weather was balmy, the sky was a brilliant blue, the sun shone, the beach was litter free and we had the whole of it to ourselves. We had landed in Heaven, on our feet. We have loved living in Macandrew Bay since August 1978 and I much enjoyed working as a paediatrician at Dunedin Hospital, retiring in 2001.

My interest in wild life, especially birds, started in primary school and has been a life long pastime. My father trapped rabbits and enjoyed fishing, which probably accounts for my strong hunting instincts! I also have an



enduring interest in photography, fly-fishing, running, home maintenance and travel.

Back in May 2012 our long time friend, Moira Parker asked my wife, Nina and I, so very nicely, if we would do bird counts along our Marion Street and into Colinswood Bush. We have enjoyed doing them ever since. In May 2016 Moira got us involved with setting out chew cards in Colinswood Bush and we were disappointed to find evidence of lots of possums. It was shortly after this that I started trapping possums there using Timms traps. I am hopeful that Colinswood Bush is now possum free. Since 7th February I have also been trapping on the upper Greenacres track which has proved to be a good exercise workout for me and most restful for thirteen unlucky possums.

John Aldis



We moved to Pukehiki from Waverley 2 years ago and are really enjoying living in a rural community. I have been using the numerous walking tracks on a regular basis and quickly learnt from locals that you take your own weed eater or pruning shears and clear it yourself. When I mentioned that traps needed clearing I was asked to help. I have been a tramper for 40 plus years and the lack of bird life in our bush is very noticeable and disappointing. Even worse to realise we risk losing some of these native birds. In the odd place with good bird life it's a much more enjoyable experience. The possums look easy compared to stoats, ferrets and wild cats.

Is there a Possum Lurking in Your Backyard?

Has a possum moved in to your backyard recently? If you've heard or spotted a possum lurking in your backyard, we'd love to hear from you! Even if you've simply glimpsed sign of a resident possum, such as fresh possum bite or scratch marks on your trees, chomped roses, munched apples, or possum poop deposits lying around, it would be great if you could please let us know.

Contact us by email: opbg11@gmail.com or phone/txt: 021 263 0566 and we'll get one of our Possum Response Team to contact you. Thank you very much for your help.

Every possum counts!



Possum bite and scratch marks

Volunteer Hours

As part of our reporting commitments Moira regularly compiles an estimate of the hours spent by our volunteers and trustees on anything relating to our program and although it is a tedious task since we all rather prefer to be out there possuming, the results are very interesting:

For the six months between October 2016 and the end of March 2017 we accumulated a total of 2469 hours, which is the equivalent of about 308/8hr days!

A big Thank you and well done to everybody!

A Message to everybody in 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.

Operations Manager Bruce is also looking for a volunteer to help with trap maintenance, which would happen once or twice a year and involves cleaning and making sure the mechanism works.

Upcoming Trapping Workshop

As more and more of our residents are getting familiar with monitoring and catching possums, we are now offering a **Trapping Workshop** to all interested members of our community.

Modern traps have come a long way and we will offer an opportunity for a hands on introduction to what is in use at the moment.

Details will follow in due course, but pencil in a Saturday afternoon in mid June at the Macandrew Bay Hall.

Mark Your Calendars

Peter Garden is an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to aviation and conservation and one of the world's pre-eminent eradication helicopter pilots. He was the chief pilot for predator eradication on the sub-Antarctic Campbell Island, and lead pilot for various Habitat Enhancement Programmes internationally, including the Pacific Islands, the Seychelles and the Aleutian Islands. From 2013 to 2015 Garden was helicopter adviser and flight operations manager for South Georgia Heritage Trust, working on the eradication of rats from South Georgia Island, a British territory in the south Atlantic Ocean and was also involved in the Antipodes mice eradication program.

Peter will be giving a talk on his work on Saturday 13th May 2017 at 2pm in the Macandrew Bay School Library, tickets will be \$10!

All proceeds will most generously be donated to the Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Trust. Please come along and join us for a most interesting afternoon.

NEED TO REPORT A POSSUM DEAD OR ALIVE?

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