

# OPBG Newsletter October 2017

*Working Towards a Pest-Free Peninsula since 2008*



## OPBG Calendar 2018

The new **OPBG Calendar for 2018** is available now. Please support us again with this important



fundraiser for the group and enjoy stunning images of our beautiful Peninsula brought to you by a host of local photographers. Thank you to Rod Morris, Neville Peat, Moira Parker, Chris Hewitt, Shaun Murphy from Possums' End, Sean Heseltine, Shay van der Hurk and John Barkla who were generous in

letting us use their photos. The calendars are available from the outlets listed on the flyer and also from CRT Farmlands in Dunedin.

A big thank you also to our sponsors, without whom this would not have been possible:

Allan's Beach Farmstay  
Macandrew Bay Pharmacy  
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Fantail Lodge  
St. Kilda Veterinary Centre  
Richard Farquhar, Chartered Accountant  
Kanuka Cottage and The Studio  
Possums' End  
Kingfisher Bed and Breakfast  
Hereweka Garden Retreat  
Ryder Environmental Consultants  
Portobello Tourist Park



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WORKING TOWARDS A PEST-FREE PENINSULA  
[www.pestfreepeninsula.org.nz](http://www.pestfreepeninsula.org.nz)

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Charities Commission Number: CC44121  
Thanks to our photographers: Rod Morris, Neville Peat, Moira Parker, Chris Hewitt, Shaun Murphy, Sean Heseltine and John Barkla.  
Design and printing by Certa Solutions, Dunedin.

## Upcoming Events

**Community Information Stall and selling Calendars at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Day Otago Peninsula Trust – Glenfalloch Gardens 15<sup>th</sup> October from 10.30am**

**Mitre 10 Mega, Dunedin - OPBG selling Calendars in the vestibule on 4<sup>th</sup> November from 10am**

**Otago Farmers Market Community Information Stall and selling Calendars 18<sup>th</sup> November from 7am**

## Bird Monitoring Field Trip

Two workshops plus field trips were organised for our bird monitoring volunteers in September and were well attended. Rod Morris and Bruce McKinlay provided excellent instruction on bird identification, and Ursula and Moira explained changes to the monitoring regime.

It was a welcome opportunity for our volunteers to engage with each other and exchange experiences.

Bird monitoring is in itself a solitary and quiet activity, so the opportunity to socialise surely would have been welcome.



*We are always looking for new volunteers to join our Bird Monitoring group. If you like going for walks, if you love listening to birds and if you already have a good knowledge of our local birds, then this might well be for you. And if you think you don't know enough, but would like to learn, then this is a great opportunity too... training will be provided. Please email us on [opbg11@gmail.com](mailto:opbg11@gmail.com) and we will be in touch.*



## OPBG Bird Monitoring report 2017 – Dr Richard Ewans

### ***Has a reduction in possum numbers on the Otago Peninsula coincided with any changes to bird abundance and distribution?***

This was the question the OPBG set out to answer by establishing bird monitoring in 2010. Volunteers regularly recorded all birds heard and seen on 1km slow walk transects. From 2012, bird counts were undertaken on 20 different transects. All together a total of 10,121 observations were made. 46 different bird species were recorded in a mixture of farmland, native bush, wetlands, and coastal and suburban habitats.

Richard Ewans, Eco-South, has analysed the results of the first 7 years of bird monitoring and his full report plus maps is available on the OPBG website. Richard concludes that few strong trends are discernible, although there are encouraging signs. Several species of native bird appear to have increased over time, for example bellbird, grey warbler and pukeko. Introduced birds, like blackbird and dunnock also appear to have increased over the survey period.

However, Richard also reminds us that, in ecological terms, it is a relatively short time since possum control began and a number of other predators remain uncontrolled, therefore large increases in bird populations are not to be expected at this stage of the program.

His recommendation is to keep on with the monitoring and after another 5 years undertake a more detailed analysis.

This Eco-South analysis was supported by a grant from the Otago Regional Council Environmental Enhancement Fund.

## BNZ Volunteers – Chew Carding Okia Reserve and Allans Beach #ClosedForGood



On Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> of August a group of **BNZ volunteers** rolled up their sleeves for their annual day of volunteering and gave OPBG a helping hand.

Nine keen BNZ staff members voted to donate their day putting out chew cards for possum monitoring at Okia Reserve and Allans Beach on the Otago Peninsula. The group met Moira and Ursula at the Penguin Café in Portobello. After a swift briefing Roz, Russell, Steve, Jarrod, Vinnie, Kris, Barry, Stephen & Rose set out along transects with hammer & nails,

tagging tape & lots of lure to put up chew cards. The cards filled with a yummy mix of peanut butter will give away areas of possum presence and will enable us to follow up with targeted possum trapping.

The field work was blessed with an exceptionally calm and sunny day (for Peninsula standards). By midday the amazing BNZ volunteers had



already done a day's worth of volunteer work – and still wanted more. So with plenty of energy left the crew set out to chew card the Hereweka Track as well - leap-frogging up the steep slope – in no time – and with lots of laughter! Thank you so much for all your hand-on help!! We would love to have you back.





## OPBG Winter Operations

OPBG's winter operation is now in full swing and Operations Manager Bruce Kyle is giving us an update on their progress so far: The group has now installed a grid of nearly 400 bait stations across the Sandymount, Sandfly Bay and Boulder Beach conservation areas. These reserves have historically had very high possum numbers, and the current operational program will hopefully accelerate the progress that has been made over the last four years; we expect to have nearly 500 stations in place by early November.



A combined force of contractors and volunteers are busy cutting tracks, installing stations and using an eco-friendly toxin (cholecalciferol) to reduce possum numbers and improve the survival rates for native trees,

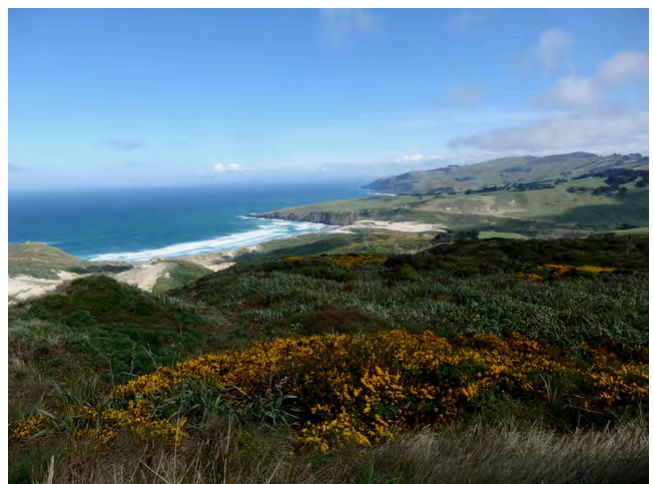
birds and other species in the area. There are some surprisingly diverse vegetation communities in the area, and we are already seeing recovery in the old Sandymount forests



and the many bird species that utilise them. A network of access tracks is being cut

for possum control that will hopefully also provide a great deal of pleasure for future generations of hikers, nature lovers and especially native species.

Some of our OPBG Trustees were out visiting the operations crew in the field and were shown around by Bruce. It was quite an eye opener to see the scale of the operation and the challenges that Bruce and his assistants, Sol and Frank, and the contractor crew from DM Holdings are facing every day. These include thick scrub on very steep terrain, slippery creek gullies and the ever-present poisonous tree nettle. Very impressive and well done to you guys.



The scenery is not too bad though.



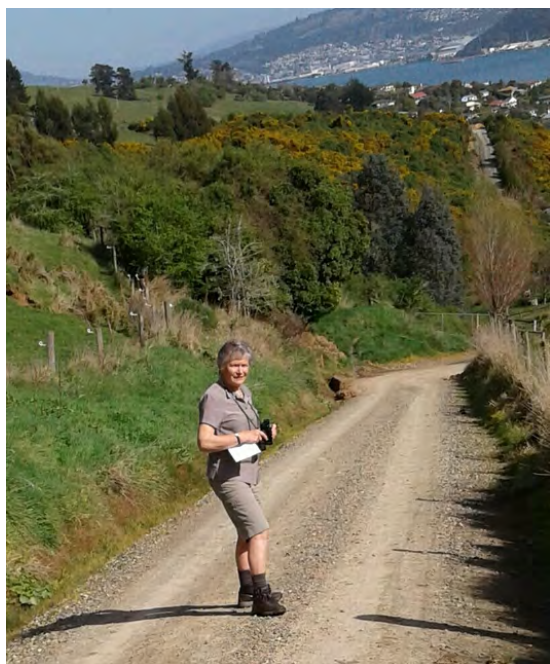
## Meet our Volunteers

### Sharyn Broni

My name is Sharyn Broni, I am a part-time ranger (at Taiaroa Head) and a full-time mum. I began volunteering for the OPBG when bird monitoring began in 2010. My daughter was 2 at the time and it was a good opportunity to get out of the house and do something that interests me. I am much more familiar with larger birds than small finches etc so it was a welcome distraction. I was living at Papnui Inlet at the time so I did the Cape Saunders Road transect until moving to St Leonards in 2014. On the first training session storing the data was mentioned and there didn't seem to be a definite system in place so I offered to enter everyone's data into excel, which I continue to do. It has been very interesting to watch the data set grow and exciting to see tomtits, rifleman, and kereru being reported. We did some successful possum trapping at Papanui Inlet and saw many benefits of there being fewer possums around, such as undisturbed sleep!!!



### Barbara Smith



I was born in England and grew up in Corbridge, a small Roman village in the countryside of Northumberland.

My father and his friend who was an ornithologist would often take me out at the weekends to walk the lanes and byways bird watching. This is where my interest in birds began.

In 1954 we came to NZ and settled on the Otago Peninsula close to Glenfalloch. It was a 10 acre block with paddocks and bush and it was here that I first started to notice the difference in the bird life. At the weekends and school holidays I would often go up into the bush to watch the birds and listen to their amazing song. They were mainly Bell Birds, Tui, Fantails and sometimes a Kereru. So different from the English countryside and bird life.

I went on and trained as a NZ Registered Nurse and now retirement has given me more time to enjoy my passion of being out in the countryside.

My daughter-in-law Liz (who worked for DOC) suggested to me that I learn to monitor birds on the Peninsula for OPBG. In 2011 I joined a training group led by Derek Onley and we went up Greenacre St. Since that day I have monitored transect 16 which starts at the shingle and goes up through the farmland for 1km.

The area is a mixture of grazing paddocks for sheep and highland cattle with pockets of bush. There is also a small stream which runs through the area. It is a very interesting track to monitor as I see many small birds both native and introduced. They come and go as the seasons change.

The farmland area shows many birds, mainly introduced Blackbirds, Thrush, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Redpolls, Dunnocks and the occasional Yellowhammer. Spur-winged plover also visit. Fantails flit around the bush by the stream. Sometimes a passing Kereru. Harrier Hawk and Skylark call from above. I have heard the Grey Warbler in 3 different areas of bush and even had one come very close to me. The little Silvereye are also to be found around the bush. The Bell Bird and Tui make the most noise and I have noticed there has been an increase of these two species over the past 6 years.

There is a small family of Pukeko which can be seen in the first paddock by some reeds. They have been there for many years and often visit my friends garden.

Paradise and Mallard Duck also visit.

I truly enjoy monitoring this track and thank Moira for all her help and encouragement.

- Barbara is one of our busiest bird monitors, she has submitted 78 bird counts over the years, more than anybody else! Well done! -

## Recent Grants



A big Thank You to **City Forests** for a grant of \$3,500 as recognition of OPBG's contribution to enhancing the Peninsula's biodiversity.

## Call for Trustees

**Are you passionate about our Peninsula Biodiversity?**

**Would you like to engage with a diverse group of like-minded people?**

**Are you perhaps already part of our group of volunteers?**

**Would you like to play a bigger part in determining our way forward?**

**.....then joining our Board of Trustees might be for you!**

**We are looking for new members, all age groups, with a wide range of skills and talents to be able to meet the challenges that the next few years will bring, so we can get closer to our goal of a Pest Free Peninsula. Get in touch, have a chat, meet the other trustees and see if it is for you!**  
**[Opbg11@gmail.com](mailto:Opbg11@gmail.com)** and we can arrange to talk or meet up.

## 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 we can set it elsewhere.  
(-I know I have a couple of residents still waiting for me to come around and collect, we'll get there, please bear with us-)

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?

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.

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## NEED TO REPORT A POSSUM DEAD OR ALIVE?

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