

# OPBG Newsletter July 2018

*Working Towards a Pest-Free Peninsula since 2008*



## Otago Peninsula Guardians/Kaitiaki

A good part of OPBG's activities last quarter happened in Sector 5. Our **Volunteer Coordinator Kate Tanner** has been busy putting together her group of "Guardians of the Peninsula", who have wasted no time getting down to business.



Earlier this year a group of keen residents from Sector 5 (Waverley, Vauxhall, Anderson's Bay and Musselburgh) joined together in the effort to wage war on possum activity in the area. Monthly Guardians meetings are taking place to look at strategies for Guardians to independently control possum numbers in Sector 5 and also to discuss other biodiversity activities in the area. At each of the meetings an invited guest speaker shares their experiences, knowledge and insights into the Guardians work. So far this has been a great success.



In order to make sure the Guardians are well equipped with the skills and tools they need to undertake their work; a Guardians trap training and health & safety session was organised. This ensures that Guardians have the skills to confidently use traps safely without supervision. The next phase of the Guardians work will be to clear traplines in Sector 5 where permanent traps will be mounted in areas which will be managed and monitored by the Guardians.



Guest Speaker Neville Peat and Operations Assistant Sol Wogan at the first Guardians meeting

This group is about more than killing possums though; other biodiversity enhancement efforts are underway such as a Sector 5 rubbish clean up, bird and lizard monitoring, weed busting and a backyard biodiversity programme has also started at local schools. A fundraising raffle was also run to raise funds for the group. We had some very happy winners.



Raffle winner Marcia Dale with OPBG Trustee Brendon Cross, who delivered her firewood



Raffle winner Vanya Thurston

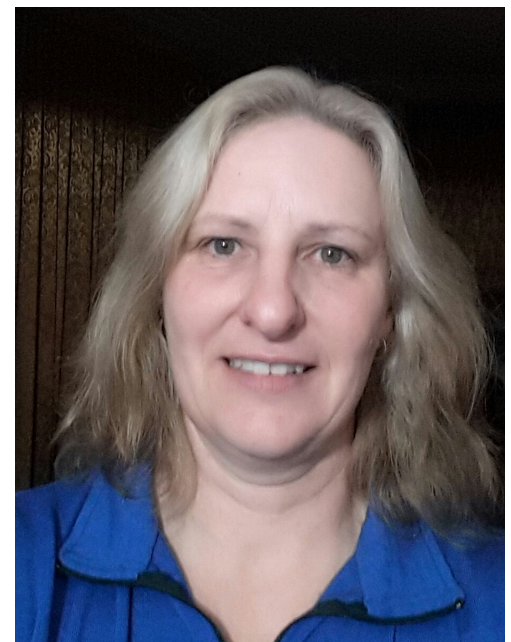
The Guardians / Kaitiaki role is pivotal in helping to control possum numbers on the greater Peninsula. They have an emerging role within OPBG which may lead the way for other start-up pest control community groups across Dunedin. Thank you to the Guardians for their work and dedication behind the scenes toward a pest-free peninsula.

## Time to meet some of our Guardians/Kaitiaki

### **Danette Little (Lastovicka).**

I have lived in Dunedin all my life and I know the Waverley area really well, I have grown up with locals in the area.

For some time, I have complained to my husband about the rats around our house, saying 'something needs to be done about it'. Then I got a flyer in the letterbox, it was from the Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Group about a pest control meeting. I went along and had a good chat with the volunteers and Trustees. They were very inspiring, and I was motivated to join the group. Everyone has been really friendly, and they have welcomed me into the group. We have been learning new skills, how to set traps, how to recognize the bite marks on chew cards and having fun at the same time as getting out in the area. My job within the group is pest monitoring, talking to the locals, handing out chew cards to the neighbours, and locating and catching possums which have been stealing apple. I have been trying to involve the neighbours in eradicating rats coming up from the bush across in my area. We are really working hard as a team, and we focus on improving, and getting pest numbers down.



Already I feel I have achieved a lot in the community with our group. My challenge is to eventually get a possum trap at every fourth house and rat trap in every household. We have traps on offer and it would be good to get them out there. It would be nice to cover all the 37 streets in Waverley. If anyone is interested in joining us, we encourage you to get in touch.



## David Patterson

My wife and I retired to Dunedin (Waverley) 2 years ago after 40 years in other countries. Having personally spent much of my youth in various activities on the Peninsula, I am grateful not much has changed and I would like to help keep it as the unique place it is.

There is a lot of unkept bush behind our house and we were soon aware that possums were tearing into our trees and shrubs and thundering along our balcony rail in the wee hours. They left plenty of reminders of their presence! I visited Elio's hunting store in South 'D' and they sold me a live trap that has served me well. I don't think the **63 possums** I have since caught would agree. Our trap is located on the rail and we have even caught Possums in it without bait. (we use mostly half-rotten bananas) – *interesting!!*



Morning surprise!

An acquaintance introduced me to Bruce Kyle, OPBG Operations Manager, who linked me to OPBG. They have done such an excellent job trapping in the area that it is hard to catch a possum (at present). Birdlife is a clear evidence.

I am interested to help maintain the fight to keep predators out of the region.

## Kay Raw

I live in Glendevon Place and have resided here for nearly 40 years. We have raised 2 children in this house, who have since flown the coop to Auckland with their respective partners. They both attended Grants Braes Kindergarten and school then moved on to Tahuna and Bayfield.



I became involved with OPBG because I was fed up with the possums getting more of the fruit from my trees than I was. We have 3 plum trees and a nonsuch peasgood apple tree along with other smaller fruit trees – most of which the possums were stripping on an annual basis. We also noted that we didn't seem to have as much bird life about as we did years ago even though we feed them during winter.

I have a friend who runs Project Kereru, where she rehabilitates injured kereru and releases them back into the wild. I was having a moan to her about the possums getting most of our fruit from our trees. She traps predators around her aviaries to protect the birds and other wildlife she has managed to attract to the area.

She lent me the first Timms trap to start me on my journey as a possumer. It has been a challenge for me as I don't cope well with killing things (flies excluded!) so whatever method I use to get the possums, they have to be dead for me to deal with them.

I have been looking after 1 trap outside our bottom gate, for about 3 years, which so far has caught 8 possums still using this Timms trap. I have also helped with a bit of track clearing and putting out some chew cards. I enjoy being outside bashing around in the bush more than doing housework – any excuse to avoid it! With the help of Sol and Kate I am hoping to be able to look after the Torr Street trap line along with another couple of neighbours in the street.

Until I joined the group, I felt a bit isolated and unsure of what I was doing. With the help and support of these wonderful people, I am far more confident about the project and I am sure we have made a huge difference to the Larnach Road bush area. I had buckets of apples this year and far more waxeyes and tuis than we have had in years. I feel like I am reaching my target.

***If you are keen on getting involved with the Sector 5 OPBG Guardians group or would like to attend the monthly meetings, contact Kate at [volunteers@opbg.nz](mailto:volunteers@opbg.nz).***

## **Volunteer Activities on the Greater Peninsula (Sectors 1-4)**

Fortnightly track cutting sessions have been taking place throughout the winter months to support our busy operations team by keeping the traplines clear. These sessions can be quite adventurous at times and we have lots of fun along the way. If you are keen on lending a hand and joining us for a day out in the bush with some spectacular views, please let us know.

The views are spectacular:



**Papanui and Hoopers Inlet from Sandymount**

Toward the end of August, we will post our OPBG spring time activities on our Facebook page so be sure to follow us

[www.facebook.com/pestfreeopeninsula/](https://www.facebook.com/pestfreeopeninsula/)

***There are volunteer activities to suit all ages and all levels of fitness, whether it be wrapping up chew cards, letter box drops, numbering traps, cutting tracks, pulling weeds or just joining in on a meeting – we would love to hear from you. For further information about becoming involved with the OPBG please email [volunteers@opbg.nz](mailto:volunteers@opbg.nz) or text 021 0237 5970.***



## OPBG Track Cutting Blitz Sessions Winter 2018

Date	Time	Location
Thursday 02 August 2018	9.30am – 3.30pm	Sandfly Bay / Sandymount / Boulder Beach
Thursday 16 August 2018	9.30am – 3.30pm	Sandfly Bay / Sandymount / Boulder Beach
Thursday 30 August 2018	9.30am – 3.30pm	Sandfly Bay / Sandymount / Boulder Beach

## Possum monitoring

### Busy Winter Season Ahead for OPBG

The OPBG is in the middle of another busy winter season. Possums are very active at the moment moving from place to place and we need to be able to track them down. In order to do this we are putting out non-toxic, peanut butter or chocolate based chew cards to find out where the possums are and following up with targeted trapping.

### *Can you help?*

Yes! We are asking local residents to put out chew cards on their section or areas close to home and report back to us if there are any possum bite marks. Not hearing a possum at night is no guarantee that there isn't a wandering possum at your place. Setting chew cards is quick and simple and a great winter activity for children too.



*A freshly set chew card... waiting for a chew.*

### **Pick up some chew cards today!**

Packs of 3 chew cards can be collected from the Portobello Store, if you are keen on lending a much-needed hand. The packs come complete with instructions and explain what to do if you discover possum chews.

### ***Do you know which critters chewed these cards?***

Head down to the Portobello Store for your chew cards and identification sheet!





It would be really helpful to know the location of chew cards with possum bites.

Please email: [brenda.wayne@xtra.co.nz](mailto:brenda.wayne@xtra.co.nz) or text 0274 053 999

For more information about our activities and how you can get involved please email [volunteers@opbg.nz](mailto:volunteers@opbg.nz) or visit our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/pestfreepeninsula/>

## Peninsula Trappers

Trapping continues all over the Peninsula by a dedicated team of community trappers under the supervision of Moira and Kate, who are continuously on the lookout for people to join the team either as chew card deployers or as follow upperers to set the traps where possums are indicated.

Please let us know if you are interested:

[volunteers@opbg.nz](mailto:volunteers@opbg.nz)

Clockwise from top: Moira getting ready; Echo, Lorne, Jared and Kate all set up; and success for Marita and Echo





## Operations Team

Bruce Kyle, our Operations Manager now has 5 operations assistants and they are working hard on the winter operation, which sees a concerted effort in eliminating possum hotspot areas in the more remote parts of the Peninsula. A team of external contractors is due to start in some designated areas in early August and should help tackling some of the known breeding areas.

**The grand total as of the end of June came to 15,632 possums!**

**Mark your calendars, coming up soon:**



*Kereru, Tree Top Drive, Portobello*

*photo Brenda Cameron*

## 2018 OPBG Bird Call Workshop

It is tricky matching the call to the bird!

Join us for a presentation and some games and activities to help identify the look and call of birds found on the Otago Peninsula. The workshop is ideal for Peninsula residents interested in bird life and particularly those already involved with bird surveys.

**When:** Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> September

**Where:** NZ Marine Studies Centre  
185 Hatchery Road, Portobello

**Time:** 2-4pm

**Cost:** Free, but space is limited so we advise registering early to book a place: Email [secretary@opbg.nz](mailto:secretary@opbg.nz)

## 2019 OPBG Calendar

Watch this Space! The new 2019 OPBG Calendar is in preparation with our new calendar team of Sophie Fern, Mark Crawford and Laurie White

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

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

### **A Year in the Life of a Possum!**

**What are they up to during the next few months?**

#### **August**

The hungry month: use fresh, strong baits in traps. Possums love the smell of curry, cinnamon, raspberry and rose oil. Mix one of these with flour and icing sugar to make a 'tree blaze,' which should attract possums from afar.

#### **September**

Dispersal time for the previous Spring's batch of joeys; some Otago Peninsula possums can breed twice a year. Good time to target pine trees.

#### **October**

What is a possum hotspot? An area of favourable habitat with good, safe den sites, seasonal food resources, and free from roaming dogs. High numbers of possums can aggregate in these locations. *"Once a hotspot, always a hotspot".*