

## From The Team

Well into autumn now and possums have ceased roaming around looking for mates and are hunkering down for winter and to bear their young. Over May-July possums are known to eat Tutu, Mahoe/Whiteywood, Kanuka, Macrocarpa and Pine, as well as grasses, clover and invertebrates. Food will become scarce over the next few months, which makes it a great time to detect and trap possums. If you want to place chew cards to detect possums, or a trap to catch one please contact us through the OPBG website [predatorfreepeninsula.nz](http://predatorfreepeninsula.nz).

Possum numbers have been reduced to low levels in many regions of the Peninsula, which means each possum caught or sighted really counts, so we encourage you to keep reporting possums at [possums@opbg.nz](mailto:possums@opbg.nz)

Now that we have entered Covid19 Level 1, OPBG has resumed possum control on the Otago Peninsula. Contractors began pre-feeding bait stations in the northern areas of the Peninsula in early June and putting toxin in them by early July. OPBG staff were busy during lockdown filming videos on the backyard deployment of possum traps and updating a Fact Pack containing information about OPBG activities over the 2020-2021 period. This new information is available through the "Resources" tab on the OPBG website. A big thank you to the backyard trappers who caught a majority of the 57 possums caught during the lockdown period.

### Bruce Kyle - Operations Manager

**We have the CWAC contractors doing another round of mop-up with toxin in Sectors 1, 2 and 3. This work will take approximately one month to complete. Please read the warning signs if you come across any, and please heed the advice. Also, a big thank you to all the landowners out there who are always so supportive in giving us consent to work on their property and help us reach our goal.**

Again please let us know if you are NOT using any OPBG traps anymore, which we could then pick up and pass on to someone else.

Finally, as well as wanting people to help with trapping or chew carding we would also love to have people keen to walk some of our track networks to help keep the weeds down. If you are interested please email us first to register your interest. [operations@opbg.nz](mailto:operations@opbg.nz)

As this falls under our track clearing Health & Safety plan, we would need to give you an induction, training and make sure you are aware of possible hazards, so you can avoid them. Many of the tracks are in beautiful locations that you would normally not easily get to, so give us a shout if you are keen.

## Mike Stuart – Peninsula Community Coordinator

Marcia and Mike have been busy establishing a line of traps along the Leith Walk at the end of Hereweka Street, Portobello, with the welcome help of a willing volunteer. The volunteer has adopted the line and will be monitoring it regularly to maintain and clear the traps. The Leith Walk line will form part of a series of trap lines stretching from Edwards Bay to Hoopers Inlet and provide a barrier to prevent possums from spreading back onto the outer regions of the Peninsula. Two trap lines have also been set up recently on private land near Edwards Bay. Further trap lines will soon be established at Harwood and along Alans Beach Road. Mike is presently looking for volunteers to help set up these lines and to regularly maintain and clear the traps. If you are up to the task, please contact Mike directly on 021 2424 944 or at [peninsula@opbg.nz](mailto:peninsula@opbg.nz).

A steady flow of requests for backyard traps has provided Mike with plenty to do around getting those Trapinators out of their boxes and onto trees where they can do their deadly work. Possum reports and associated requests for traps are predominantly around Portobello and Macandrew Bay at present.

### 2020 OPBG Harwood Trapping Workshop

The earlier planned Harwood Trapping Workshop had to be postponed due to Lockdown. We are able now to reschedule to:

**When: Saturday July 25**

**Where: Harwood's Scott Hall,**

**Time: 2 until 4 pm.**

It will be an informal workshop, so just turn up any time, meet the crew, pick our brains, and see what OPBG is up to.

## Marcia Dale – Guardians Coordinator

### Rat Trapbox Working Bee

Are urban areas rattier than rural? We certainly have a lot of bait stolen from our possum traps in Sector 5. Signs of *Rattus rattus* being the culprit include traps having holes chewed through by rats and the occasional rat being caught in a trapinator. We're gradually adding a rat trapbox to every possum trap location in order to leave the trapinators freshly baited and ready to catch possums. Well, that's the theory anyway, one recently added rat trapbox was dragged 6 metres away from its original spot. Presumably a local cat was attempting to drag the dead rat inside of it home to show off its good hunting skills to its proud owners. It eventually gave up and had a rat snack to recover from its exertions.

Danette and Derek from Custom Home Products once again generously shared their workshop space and tools for another rat trapbox working bee. Judy and Kirk went from complete novices to hardcore experts on the hand shear (aka steel guillotine). We tested out a new design of rat trapbox that is used up in the North Island and it proved much easier to build. We cranked out 40 boxes in a few hours. Some of the boxes will be heading out Harwood way, while others will be used by Tainui School kids next term



## Charlotte Patterson – Modelling of possum re-invasion

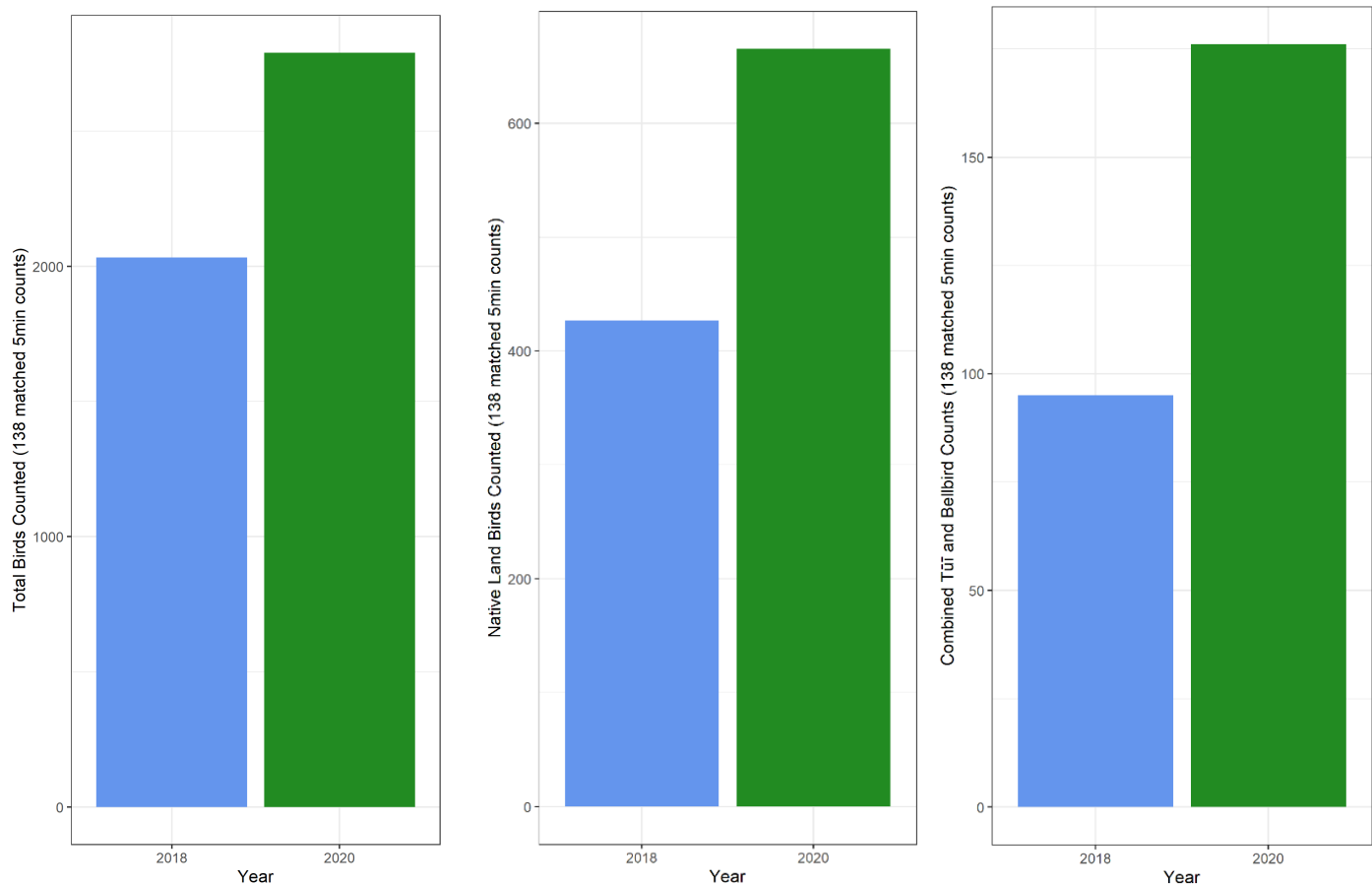
While the eradication operation continues to reduce the numbers of possums at the tip of the Peninsula, Sector 5 is building up the number of traps in the buffer zone. Next winter the eradication is due to move right up to the rural-urban interface, the boundary between Sector 4 and 5. When the rural parts of the Peninsula are possum free, that's when the Guardian's work really starts. Our job will be to keep any possums from reinvading. Luckily we've got plenty of support in our task, including from University of Otago's Masters student Charlotte Patterson. At last week's Guardians meeting Charlotte gave us a wonderful presentation on her research that she did as part of her Master's degree. She used simulating modelling to predict the patterns of possum reinvansion onto the Peninsula following eradication, over a 40 year time period. Her modelling indicated that if any possums did get through our Sector 5 defences their spread would be relatively slow, provided we are achieving eradication and not leaving isolated possum hotspots behind. So as long as we remain vigilant post eradication we have a good chance of stopping incursions before they get out of hand. It was a thoroughly enjoyable presentation and I can see why she earned an A+ for her Master's Degree



Waverley 5 min Bird Counts

We are lucky in Sector 5 to have had a Wildlife Management student, Frances Perez, conduct an extensive 5 minute bird count study prior to possum control ramping up in mid 2018. Earlier this year, Marcia and Jon Bailey (who did the 2018 counts) repeated the counts. Marcia’s brother is a professional statistician (he got the brains in the family) and offered to look at the data from the Waverley bird counts before and after possum control. He made some pretty graphs for us, the first of which shows a 36% increase in total bird numbers (2110 to 2871). Native land birds increased by 57% (440 to 691). Impressively, the combined total of Tui and Bellbirds increased by 86% (96 – 179).

We can’t say with 100% certainty that our possum trapping is the sole cause of increase, there are many other variables that influence populations numbers, but in my professional opinion as an ecologist I think what we’re doing here is really starting to pay off for the birds. Possums have a big impact on nectar feeding birds such as Tui and Bellbird. Without possums eating all the flower buds there is more food available for these birds.





## 2020 OPBG Bird Call Workshop

Rod Morris has plenty of tips for the tricky task of matching the call to the bird! Join us for a presentation and some activities to help identify the look and call of birds found on the Otago Peninsula. The Workshop is ideal for those wishing to brush up their skills prior to the start of the Spring bird counts. And if you know someone who might be interested in getting involved, please bring them along.

Birds' nests can be a clue to the species living in an area, but are not easy to identify. We will have some different nests on display at the Workshop and, if you have collected any, please bring them along for identification.

Rod will also be bringing along a couple of "special guests", come along to meet them and see what they can teach us about protecting Peninsula birds.

**When: Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

**Where: NZ Marine Studies Centre**

185 Hatchery Road, Portobello

**Time: 2-4pm**

**No cost**, but space is limited, so please register with us to book your place:

Email : [guardians@opbg.nz](mailto:guardians@opbg.nz)

### A War on Rats

You don't have to be actively involved in a group such as OPBG to contribute to our biodiversity, we have many residents who are all doing their bit for the protection of our native wildlife. One of them, Dave, has declared 'war' on rats, he felt too many of them were starting to come into the house with the colder weather and with poison not being that effective, he hunkered down in the shed and started building his own trap boxes. He caught close to 50 in the first month with 12 traps and over the past 12 months the tally came to over 160. They in turn would have destroyed many native birds, lizards, moths etc. He has his own website now and blog, where he encourages all you like minded people to share experiences and knowledge. If you are interested, please get in touch on [www.ratwar.org](http://www.ratwar.org)

The benefits to many of our tiny native birds such as the rifleman, see next article, would be substantial.



## Rifleman Project

Many of our attendees of the Bird Call Workshop go on to become bird counters on our Peninsula wide bird count transects. These have been running for ten years now and have shown upward trends in birds such as Tui and bellbird. Unfortunately, Marcia realised when looking at the data earlier this year that the trend was going in the opposite direction for the peninsula's smallest bird, titipounamu/rifleman. Some former strongholds now have no recent sightings of the birds.

But all is not lost! Properties where nest boxes are provided and pest control is undertaken are seeing a localised rise in numbers. One such property near Hereweka/Harbour Cone had 10 out of 12 nest boxes utilised last breeding season.

These little guys are the size of a fluffy golf ball and weigh 6g, about the same as a \$1 coin. Predation by rodents and mustelids is likely to be the leading cause of the decline. While possums are still number one on our hit list, we couldn't stand by and do nothing for the rifleman. So OPBG and STOP (Save The Otago Peninsula) have joined forces and are busy building and installing nest boxes in rifleman habitat. We aimed to get 50 nest boxes out by mid-July to be ready for this year's breeding season. We're now in the vicinity of 80 boxes built by some fabulous STOP volunteers. Installation has begun in known rifleman territories and we're on track to get the rest of the boxes out in the next two weeks.

OPBG is mapping the distribution of riflemen vs existing nest boxes and working to fill in the gaps. If you have any sightings of rifleman on the Peninsula, either recent or historical, please let Marcia know at [guardians@opbg.nz](mailto:guardians@opbg.nz).



Rifleman pair in natural nest cavity Photo Rod Morris



OPBG Bird Monitor Adrienne Mulqueen installing a newly built rifleman nest box



## New On The Board

We would like to introduce and welcome two new Trustees on the OPBT Board:

### Jenny Rock –

Dr Jenny Rock is a biologist with 20 years' experience in field- and lab-based biological research, on both invertebrate and vertebrate animals. Much of her work has had an applied focus, whether on population genetics as it relates to conservation biology and evolutionary ecology, or on thermal adaptation and climate. She also holds a degree in human ecology, and much of her recent research and teaching has been in community-based participatory practice and inter/transdisciplinary interaction. For nearly a decade, she lectured in science communication at the University of Otago, and now holds multiple research and adjunct faculty positions, both at U Otago, and internationally (University of Westfjords, Iceland; College of the Atlantic, Maine, USA).



### Richard Carlson –

I grew up in Highcliff Road, Portobello before heading overseas in 1992 and volunteering for Greenpeace. Several years of environmental activism in Australia led to a career specialising in logistics, research and direct-action projects in Indonesia, PNG and Japan. In 2002 while living in the UK I was approached by Greenpeace International to co-ordinate a forest project in Finland and since then have been a freelance Action Co-Ordinator, gaining extensive experience of global projects and further specialising in marine operations and remote area projects. My travels into the Southern Ocean for whaling and fishery's protection campaigns resulted in a renewed appreciation for the ecology of New Zealand and our sub Antarctic islands. I returned to live in NZ in 2008 with my partner Kate and a young family, and together built a modern, earth insulated eco house with renewable power system at Shag point. Last year we moved back to Portobello. I am very pleased to be part of this wonderful Otago Peninsular project as we move into the final years of the eradication plan.



## As Local As – Ray White Real Estate


**Madelon White** and **Jordan Arnold** from Ray White Real Estate are offering their support of Peninsula based community groups such as OPBG in the form of a donation from each house sale on the Peninsula. This is an ongoing commitment from them and will directly benefit our goal of making the Peninsula predator free. OPBG would like to acknowledge their support and give them a Big Thank You for this generous offer.

# As Local As.


Local agents supporting our local community.  
When you sell with us, money goes directly to Peninsula based groups and causes.

**RayWhite**


**Madelon White**  
0274370328  
madelon.white@raywhite.com



**Predator Free Dunedin**



**Jordan Arnold**  
0272498461  
jordan.arnold@raywhite.com



## Donation – SBS Bank

A Big Thank You to our Dunedin SBS Bank for a very welcome surprise. OPBG is the recipient of a donation of \$1000 from their monthly draw. Very much appreciated!

Right: OPBG Trustees Laurie, Dave and Marita and Manager Nathan with Alison and Jinny from SBS



## Health & Safety

All active Health & Safety plans have now had new sections added relating to the current Covid19 hazard and are available to download from the OPBG website. Volunteers are encouraged to get familiar with these updates on the plans relevant to your work. This is particularly important in the wet weather conditions that we are experiencing at the moment, for instance take special care on slippery surfaces.

**Cumulative Grand Total (30/06/2020) = >19,100**

***THINKING ABOUT BECOMING A TRUSTEE? – PLEASE CONTACT US! WE WOULD LIKE TO INVITE ANYONE INTERESTED TO COME AND TALK TO US***

**Please contact Marita at: [secretary@opbg.nz](mailto:secretary@opbg.nz)**

Apart from our general contact emails, you can contact our team under:

Nathan: [manager@opbg.nz](mailto:manager@opbg.nz)  
Marcia: [guardians@opbg.nz](mailto:guardians@opbg.nz)

Bruce: [operations@opbg.nz](mailto:operations@opbg.nz)  
Mike: [peninsula@opbg.nz](mailto:peninsula@opbg.nz)

**Remember to Report-A-Peninsula-Possum –**


**[possums@opbg.nz](mailto:possums@opbg.nz)**

## Contact Us

For more information visit our website:

 [predatorfreepeninsula.nz](http://predatorfreepeninsula.nz)

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter:


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

 [OPBG11](https://twitter.com/OPBG11)

For general enquiries:


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

To report a possum:

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

To find out more about becoming a volunteer:

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

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