

## What's new?

*Possum control on the Northern areas of the Peninsula using toxins has finished for the 2020. OPBG staff are now busy setting up a network of traps, which we call a "Lean Trap Network" to mop up any remaining possums and help demonstrate we have got them all with no catches. These traps are rolled out in Sectors 1,2 and 3 and are spaced on roughly a grid pattern 500m apart on available habitat. OPBG staff and volunteers are also busy establishing a trap line at Otakou and continue to set up traps in people's back yards.*

*Young possums (joeys) that have been growing in pouches over winter and early spring will be spending more time riding on their mother's back until they reach independence towards the end of summer. Over October-November possums will be eating Kowhai, Pohutukawa, Eucalyptus, Willow and Poplar, with an added protein burst of bird's eggs and nestlings.*

*It is pleasing to see that chew cards made available at the Portobello Deli and have been disappearing at a steady rate and are hopefully out there being chewed on by possums. If a possum does chew on your card or you see or hear a possum, please report it at [possums@opbg.nz](mailto:possums@opbg.nz) and, if you want to get involved in our work or host a trap in your back yard, please contact us through the OPBG website ([predatorfreepeninsula.nz](http://predatorfreepeninsula.nz)).*

## Bruce Kyle - Operations Manager

The CWAC contractors will be coming in after lambing to record the final bait take from their operation across sectors 1, 2 and 3. Bruce has been looking in some of those stations as he puts the lean grid out, and reports that there is still bait take in a few areas.

Once the contractors have checked and removed remaining bait, waxtag monitoring lines will be laid out to remeasure possum abundance and to verify where there are remaining possum 'hotspots'. It may also allow us to determine what characterises possum hotspots when numbers are very low, and/or whether possums continue to form semi-social clusters.

We will also be putting out trail cameras over the coming months to monitor possum activity and behaviour around devices that will include some 'Autolure' mayonnaise dispensers; these are known to attract a variety of wild animals.

A very big Thank You to Fiona Morrison, one of our volunteers, who is doing a tremendous job at Sandymount maintaining and recutting tracks. And also to our regular trappers, who continue to rework areas that have been reinvaded. In the DOC areas, Graeme Boyes caught approx. 96 possums at Sandfly Bay, and Craig Dunlop & Kim Cameron have helped to remove another 108 or so from Sandymount A (Hoopers Inlet side).

Last but not least our faithful possum dog Puku was officially observed to get her tally at Sandymount to 100 possums.

**Tally: 19,503**



Sophie, Craig and Kim track cutting at Sandymount



One of Fiona's tracks before and after with the help of her indispensable flax knife



## OPBG Bird Call Workshop.

After a brief postponement to find a larger venue that could accommodate physical distancing, 57 people and one rat attended the recent OPBG Bird Call Workshop held at the Coronation Hall, Portobello. In keeping with our sudden elevation to Level 2, a team of volunteer seamstresses were creatively inspired to fashion each attendee a re-usable mask made of appropriate bird-patterned fabric. We all looked suitably ornithological in our new-found Covid couture.



Masked attendees of the OPBG Bird Call Workshop.

Once again Rod Morris entertained and informed us with his knowledgeable presentation of bird calls. Rod's performance did not extend to the magical appearance of doves from a hat, but a predatory rat was pulled from a cage, with Marcia Dale appearing in a supporting role as rat-wrangler.



Rod Morris (right) and Marcia Dale with rat (left), explaining the effects of predators on bird populations.

Graham McArthur and Deb Wilson did a herculean job setting up and coordinating the audio-visuals, with Graham also filming Rod's presentation so that we can make it available to a wider audience via the internet. Audience participation extended to some rather convincing renditions of bird calls, especially examples of the shining cuckoo and peafowl. After refreshments and muffled conversation, we reconvened for a quiz on the more common bird calls, which hopefully leaves us all better prepared to identify our local birds by sight or sound.

A big thank you to all the presenters, volunteers and attendees for their forbearance and help toward making this a most successful and enjoyable evening.

We would like to acknowledge our Guardians Coordinator, rifleman champion and avid bird monitor, Marcia, whose hard work and enthusiasm in organizing this workshop made it such a resounding success. It would not have been possible without you, THANK YOU!

### OPBG Harwood Trapping Workshop

After a postponement due to Covid19 restrictions our Harwood trapping workshop took place at the end of July, organized by our OPBG Peninsula Coordinator, Mike Stuart, himself a Harwood local, who has been busy engaging his community, setting traps and helping reducing possum numbers.





## Mike Stuart – Peninsula Coordinator

Mike is not restricted to looking after the Harwood community, but has recently visited Macandrew Bay School to talk to some of their students:



When Europeans first arrived in Ōtepoti (Dunedin) in the 1860s, people on ships in the harbour could not hear others speaking due to the volume of bird song. Sixty years later, the bird song was almost gone. When Mike (OPBG Community Coordinator) visited classes at Macandrew Bay School in early August he asked pupils what they thought the cause of this was. Their immediate response was to accuse predators of eating all the birds, but it was soon pointed out that habitat loss through land clearance was by far the greatest cause of lost to biodiversity on the Otago Peninsula in the late 1800s. Hence the message to students was that non-native predators are presently the greatest risk to our native animals, but animals also need safe

places to live.

Students had previously deployed chew cards in their back yards and displayed their results with infectious enthusiasm. Rats chews were most evident, with cards converted to confetti, with a few mouse nibbles to round out the rodents. Rat traps were identified as the obvious answer to the 'rat problem' and students were presented with a rat trap box design made of re-purposed plastic. The hope being to inspire the pupils to come up with similar innovative designs.



Creative design for rat trap box using plastic waste.

So, what to do about the housing shortage for native animals? Discussions with the pupils centred around how to create habitat and look after native animals. Planting of native plants that create homes and food emerged as one solution. Bird nectar feeders and nesting boxes were also proposed and a weta 'hotel' was shown as a direct method of building healthy homes.

Thank you to Macandrew Bay School for the opportunity to share what OPBG does and encourage the students to do their bit to help our native animals. The pupil's boundless energy and enthusiasm represent hope for the future, as does their willingness to openly engage in thinking about the problems facing our native animals and the ways that they can help.



## Possum Control

Possum control on the northern areas of the peninsula using toxins has finished for the 2020. OPBG staff are now busy setting up a network of traps to continue the slow mopping up process. Part of this process is the establishment of a line of kill-traps at Ōtākou and continued efforts to build a network of backyard traps in residential areas. Possums have been detected recently at Ōtākou and the hope is that the new trap line will mop these up.

To build a network of traps about Harwood, Ōtākou and Harrington Point, Mike needs the help of locals willing to host traps in their back yards. Installing traps in back yards has previously been in reaction to possum sightings. With lower possum densities, however, the establishment of a trap network will enable the community to help mop up the remaining possums and respond quickly to possum sightings or chew card detections. If you want to help rid your neighbourhood of possums by hosting a trap in your back yard, please contact **Mike at 021 242 4944**. OPBG has several videos on our website ([www.predatorfreepeninsula.nz](http://www.predatorfreepeninsula.nz)) that provide information on the traps we deploy in back yards and on pet safety.

Residents of Harwood may have noticed Mike, clothed in Swandri and leather hat, and being walked regularly by his black dog, Luna. Luna has previously done her bit for possum detection, treeing a possum back in July, and has continued to contribute to predator control by consuming possums. Although she appears confused by processed possum wrapped in plastic, particularly when they're more fun while still mobile and wrapped in fur.



## Volunteer Activities

Thank you to those people who continue to volunteer their valuable time by maintaining trap lines and traps in their back yards. Two trap lines in private conifer plantations near Portobello during July caught five female possums and eight males in 42 days. No possums have been caught since the beginning of August. Back yard trappers have also caught five possums since August, one each at Harwood, Pukehiki and Macandrew Bay, and two at Edwards Bay.

Eleven checks of a trap line along the Hereweka track have been completed to date. Some sign of possum activity occurred in July, but no possums have been caught. Rodents have been eating the bait from traps, so both rat and mouse traps have been added to the trap line and are now busy catching mice. Chew cards have also been deployed recently to see if any possums are still in the area.

Timms traps were recently replaced with Trapinators along a trap line in reserved vegetation along Allans Beach Road. We are currently looking for a volunteer to maintain the line, which would involve fortnightly checks to clear the traps and renew bait and lure. If you are interested in helping us with this, please contact **Mike at 021 242 4944**.

It is encouraging to see that chew cards provided to the public at Portobello Deli have been disappearing at a steady rate. No reports of possum chews about Portobello have been received, which is not necessarily a bad thing as it could indicate that the number of possums in about Portobello are presently low. Nevertheless, keep up to good work, and if there is any sign of a possum please report it at [possums@opbg.nz](mailto:possums@opbg.nz), or directly to Mike.

## DOC Community Fund

OPBG has successfully applied for funding from the latest round of the DOC Community Fund to continue our possum work at Sandymount. It also allows us to set up network of stoat and ferret (mustelid) traps to complement existing predator control at Sandymount by Forest and Bird as part of their "Bring Back the Seabirds" project, so we can get more titi breeding on the Peninsula as pictured on a sub-Antarctic predator free island.

We will be looking for volunteers to help with checking the mustelid traplines. We will follow up with more information on how to get involved or contact one of our volunteer coordinators to register interest.

<https://www.odt.co.nz/.../rural-life.../800000-conservation>

## Health & Safety

As always, we need to be mindful of working safely, especially now with track maintenance and trapping in full swing. Volunteers are encouraged to get familiar with the H&S plans relevant to your work.

**Cumulative Grand Total (October 2020) = >19,500**

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

Manager: [manager@opbg.nz](mailto:manager@opbg.nz) Bruce: [operations@opbg.nz](mailto:operations@opbg.nz)  
Marcia: [guardians@opbg.nz](mailto:guardians@opbg.nz) Mike: [peninsula@opbg.nz](mailto:peninsula@opbg.nz)

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

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

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## 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:

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