

## New Member to the Team

### Paula Cross – Community Coordinator

I would like to introduce myself as the new OPBG Community Coordinator. I have lived on the Otago Peninsula for many years and have a passion for enhancing and protecting unique native species that reside within our beautiful landscape. As well as being a farm hand and working on environmental projects, I have a background in education and more recently experience in facilitating groups for improved outcomes in health and wellbeing.

I am thrilled to begin meeting the requirements of the role by supporting and growing the wonderful group of our volunteers. I have emailed many to introduce myself and gather information, but if you are a backyard volunteer, or wish to become one, living between Macandrew Bay and the Otago Peninsula Headland and have not received an e-mail from me please get in touch: [peninsula@opbg.nz](mailto:peninsula@opbg.nz) or phone Paula - 021 242 4944



### Operations - Bruce Kyle

The past few months have seen the operations team engaged with the lean trapping network in Sectors 1,2,and 3 (Cape Saunders, Portobello to Taiaroa Head, and the wider Portobello area). This network is slowly mopping up possums after the last toxin operation finished in November 2020. Since then, 78 possums have been removed with minimal hassle for landowners.

Contract Wild Animal Control (CWAC) have been held up by Covid in their Sector 4 bait delivery round, but the prefeed take has certainly shown where most of the remaining possums are situated. This work will take us close to Christmas due to the Covid disruption.

A lot of blood and sweat has also gone into maintaining tracks and installing more bait stations in the DOC areas. Many thanks to Fiona, Craig and Kim, John, Alister and the OPBG team, the Guardians and the *many* great supporters, landowners, residents and volunteers that contribute so generously for the greater good!

The next three months will be gone in no time as we prepare for next year's battle. Finally, a fond farewell to Mike as he heads for greener pastures, and a warm welcome to Paula as the new community coordinator for the Peninsula.

Cheers, Bruce



Photo: Craig Dunlop 'Nice view, but!!'

### Mustelid Trapping - Nicholas Kelly

A major focus since coming out of lockdown was installing a mustelid trap line throughout Sandymount and Sandfly Bay. The primary focus of this project was to enhance the protection for the tītī colony at Sandfly Bay which is monitored annually by Forest and Bird. The fledgling success of this colony has been increasing slowly over the past two years, but it's very vulnerable to whenever ferrets or stoats get a taste for mutton bird. This was evident 3 years ago when a single ferret was caught on trail camera wiping out the majority of the tītī chicks over just a few nights.

The mustelid trap line includes double set DOC 200 traps and single set DOC 250 traps to catch rats, stoats and ferrets. The trap line spans along the DOC boundary of Sandymount to Seal Point Road creating a solid buffer to any stoats and ferrets transitioning into the colony from farmland. We plan to bait frequently and also monitor the area heavily with trail cameras. In addition to finding mustelids and rodents, our monitoring should also pick up any possums which have survived the toxin operation, currently in process.

Also, a massive shout out to Amanda Salt and the Yellow-Eyed Penguin Trust for allowing us to borrow their frame packs. We wouldn't have been able to install the trap line without them!





The OPBG operations team will be easily recognizable now with their new uniform. A Big Thank You to MacPac for the fantastic savings on the new branded jackets, which will not only keep the team snug and dry, they will also be great for community events and to represent our group in public.



### OPBG Communications team - Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Hub – Open Day (Jenny Rock, Trustee)

Due to lockdown levels our Biodiversity Hub October Open Day (centred around the Portobello Market Day) was postponed along with the Market Day until 14 November. This is not the official opening of the Hub (anticipated for start of New Year after the DCC finishes its exterior refurbishments), but a chance for a sneak preview! OPBG people will be on hand to answer questions and guide a sneaky peek.

### Locked down again...Micaela Kirby-Crowe (OPBG Planner)

The latest lockdown was a great opportunity for us to come up with new protocols on how to deal with our lean grid trap network at the various COVID levels. The operations team contacted our rural landowners in Sector's 1, 2 and 3 for feedback on how they wanted things to run and whether or not we could keep our self-reporting live-capture traps set during lockdown. Thanks to all our wonderful landowners for your support and ongoing property access.

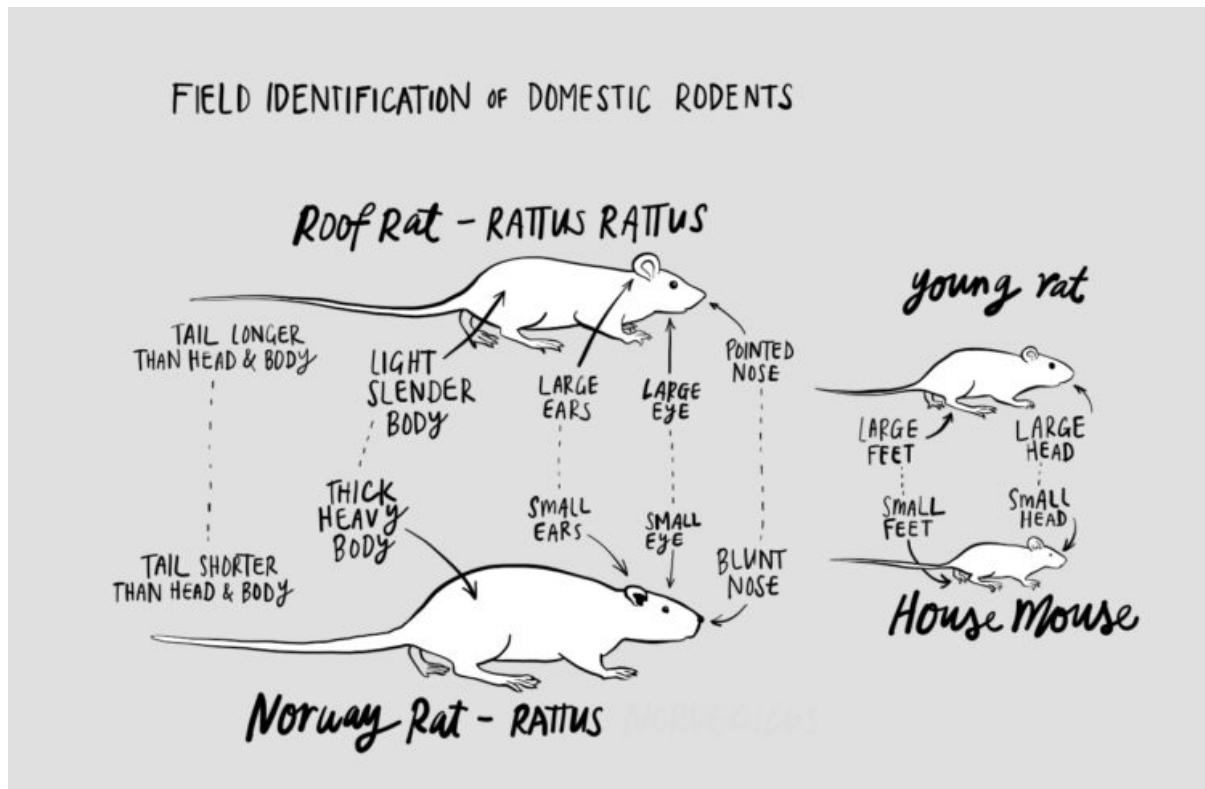
Community Engagement – Marcia Dale



Socially distanced and appropriately face covered, the Guardians group had their meeting last week to catch up on their most recent activities.

With the Peninsula total of over 20,700 possums caught, the current tally in Sector 5 stands now at 504, on top of other pests such as rats being caught and all entered into TrapNZ.

Some time was also spent on identifying the various rat species:



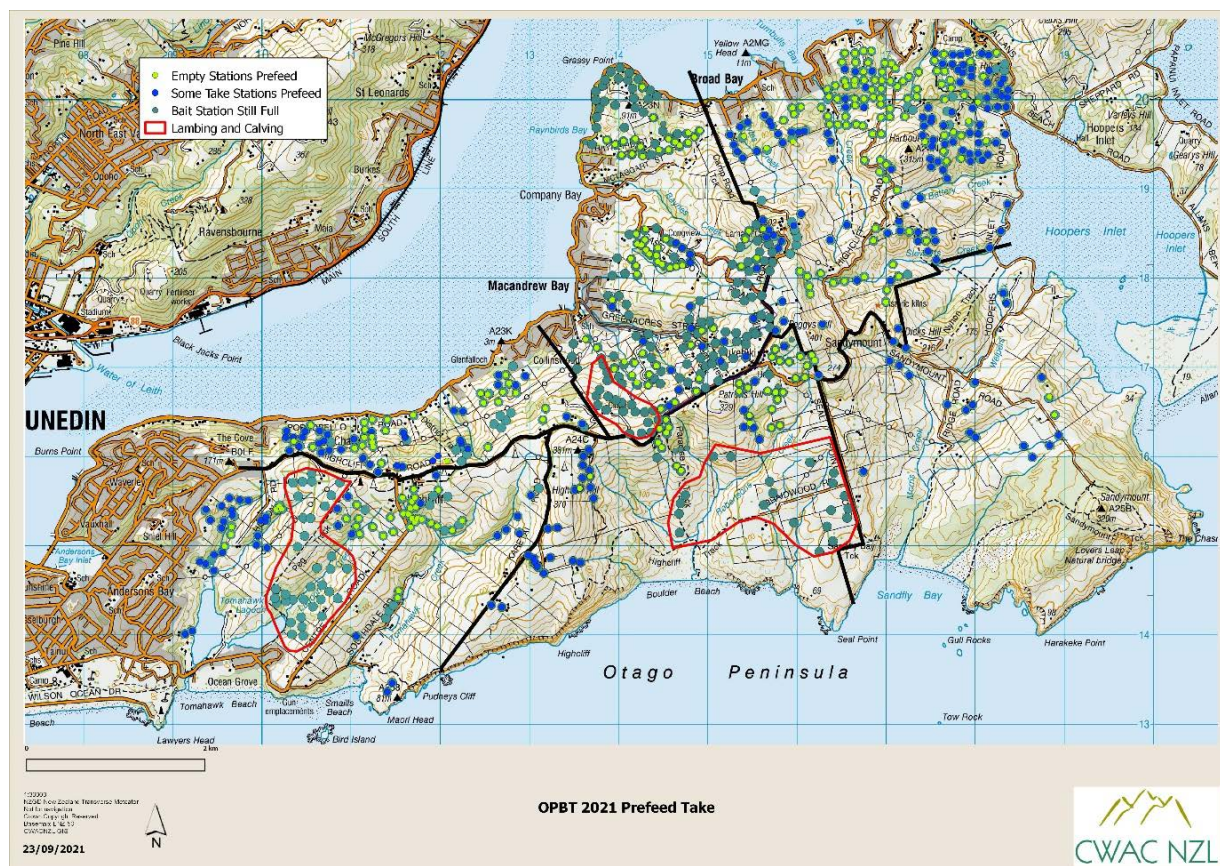


## Sector 4 Update:

Now that everything is ticking along nicely past Portobello, we have extended our operations into Sector 4. This is possibly the most challenging sector, due to its size (4500ha) and its mix of habitat and residential areas (Portobello, Broad Bay, Macandrew Bay). Sector 4 also includes the DOC reserve of Sandymount, where we've recorded the highest densities of possums across the entire Peninsula.

We have bait stations installed across almost all available possum habitat within the rural area of Sector 4. We have tailored our approach to meet with the requirements of the 164 different property owners involved in the operation. In some areas owners have opted for traps instead of toxin, and others are in the middle of lambing or calving so we are holding off until we've got the green light to access these areas. Our contractors Contract Wild Animal Control (CWAC) are carrying out the work and have produced the following map showing how much pre-feed has been taken from the bait stations by possums. Pre-feed is a non-toxic cereal pellet that possums love the taste of, and it gets them really interested in the contents of the bait stations.

Following the pre-feed round CWAC put the first round of toxin out a few weeks ago and are currently putting out the second round of toxin. As they fill the bait stations they will be measuring how much toxin has been taken from the first round and from that we can start to deduce how many possums have been removed so far.





## Sandymount Track Clearing

Thanks to the excellent and sustained efforts by Fiona Morrison, as well as Kim, Marion, Tony V, Derrith and David S, the overgrown Sandymount tracks and bait stations are now completely clear. This means that CWAC can access everything easily and are currently doing so. As you can see from the bait station map below, the coverage is particularly high in this area in order to match the sheer number of possums that this area harbours. A similar density of bait stations continues along Sandfly Bay and at Boulder Beach.



*Locations of the Sandymount Bait Safe stations*

## Trail Camera monitoring

Micaela, our operations planner, gave a talk about the trail camera monitoring she is running in Sectors 1, 2 and 3. There are currently 58 cameras installed, and they are producing a huge volume of images. We need volunteers to search through them to find out where pests are lurking, especially possums.

Zero Invasive Predators (ZIP) have created an app that reduces the amount of time required to sort through the images and classify the animals seen within them.

Micaela is also in the final stages of setting up an OPBG project on the website Zooniverse. It sounds like something out of Disney's Looney tunes, but in fact Zooniverse is a citizens science portal where volunteers from all around the world can look through footage and help classify animals or even things far off in space. Our project isn't live just yet, but check out [zooniverse.org](http://zooniverse.org) if you feel like classifying animals in the Serengeti or help astronomers identify host galaxies!



## Health & Safety – Micaela Kirby-Crowe

With the change in season, animals are becoming more mobile - humans and possums alike! The balmy spring days are a great time to dig out neglected traps, get outdoors and try catch some possums as they move around looking for mates and new territories. It's also a good time to do a spring clean out of old field gear. Appropriate footwear is a key to staying safe in the hills, boots with good tread on them can prevent slips, trips and falls, which are one of the most common incidents that occur doing field work. So why don't you treat yourself to a new pair of boots?

### Live animal dispatch workshop

The OPBG team spent an afternoon talking about how we deal with possums in live capture traps, with a focus on Health and Safety. This involved discussions on correct PPE, zoonoses, the Animal Welfare Act and mental well-being of staff. Moving toward making our Peninsula predator free is a really positive goal, but it is important to acknowledge that killing live animals can be a challenging task. Our team of dedicated staff are well-trained and take the utmost care to carry out their duty with safety and animal welfare in mind.

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

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

**Cumulative Grand Total (October 2021) = 20,756**

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

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

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To find out more about becoming a volunteer:

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