

June 2011

## ***Knockdown Possum Control Operations Completed***

On behalf of the Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Group I would like to take the opportunity to pass on to you the results of the recent possum control operations implemented over Cape Saunders (Sector 1) Portobello to Taiaroa Head (Sector 2) and Clarks/ Sheppard's Hill (Sector 3). I have summarised the results of the recent work below-

Operational start date: **1st March 2011**, Operational finish date: **29<sup>th</sup> May 2011**

	<b>Man- days</b>	<b>Poison Baits</b>	<b>Possum Kills</b>
<b>Sector 1</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>3200</b>	<b>321</b>
<b>Sector 2</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>12000</b>	<b>2080</b>
<b>Sector 3</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>350</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>16,200</b>	<b>2751</b>

**207 man-days** were involved in the possum control and follow-up possum monitoring.

**Control Methods** over the operational area consisted of the following: feratox bait bags, feratox bait stations (orange KK Bait Stations), Timms Kill Traps, Leg Hold Traps, night shooting and indicator dogs.

Approximately **16,200 poison baits** covered habitat in the operational areas and over **2751 possums** were killed. All bait bags baits stations and trap locations were gpsd and records of all animals killed were logged and nearly all toxin has been recovered off "the hill". In possum hotspots some bait bags were left out to continue to target remaining possums however these are now de-natured from the weather and are no longer viable toxic baits.

### **Non-target animals killed**

Feratox poison baits are very target specific and no non target animal deaths occurred from this method. Over the course of night shooting operations and possum monitoring using leg hold traps the following 'non-target' animal deaths have been recorded- **15 feral cats, 32 rats, 12 hedgehogs and 11 rabbits**.

We were surprised at the high number of feral cats and regularly saw 5-6 every day across different habitats and locations.

### **Public Awareness and Safety**

This has been an important responsibility for the OPBG. Letters and information packs were sent to every landowner within the operational area. Over 150 groups and individual were sent our info packs including all medical centres and veterinarians in Dunedin, tourist operators, police, local body authorities and local groups. Children at Portobello and Broad Bay Schools had a talk about the impacts of

possums in New Zealand and the risks of traps and poisons. Okia Reserve was closed for 2 weeks during the possum control operations. Warning signs were placed on all gateways with access to the operational area.

### **Follow up Work**

It will be necessary to follow up the work done over the next 12 months in Sectors 1,2 and 3 by going back onto landholders properties and setting up monitoring lines or wax tags (*non-toxic*) and if/ when these show up possums some poisoning/ trapping/ night shooting will be done as a follow up. It is also intended that the buffer (Sector 3) has in place permanent bait stations and trap lines in place (to occur over the next month) to protect the gains made in Sectors 1,2 and 3 from infiltration from possums in Sector 4.

### **Fundraising**

We have had a couple of knockbacks with funding for work in Sector 4. If you are a landholder in this sector then I ask for your patience as we continue with our efforts to keep the project rolling.

### **Community Trapping Programme**

The OPBG has targeted this aspect of the possum control programme as vital and to this end I would like to make a clarion call to all interested parties out there to help make this happen. There are 3 ways to be involved in this-

- 1) Actively trap your own property for possums (I know a lot of you are doing this already)
- 2) Volunteer to “help” and “involve” less willing or less able neighbours
- 3) Act as an urban eradication volunteer by maintaining a trap register in your garage and be responsible for ‘loaning’ our Timms traps out to people in the community.

We anticipate this happening in the communities of Harrington Point, Otakou, Harwood-Gills Corner, Pukehiki, Portobello, Broad Bay, Company Bay, Macandrew Bay and ‘The Cove’. In time your efforts will be backed up by professional possum control operators on all the rural land “behind” these communities as has already taken place in Sector 2 (Taiaroa Head).

### **Bird Monitoring**

Twelve permanent 1km long transects for bird monitoring are in place and functioning, and a further 12 transects were set up more recently in April. To all those volunteer bird monitors out there – a big thank you for your efforts to date. I haven’t met you all yet but please make yourself known to me. Moira Parker, Derek Onley, Marcia Dale and Sharyn Broni have done brilliantly in setting it all up and getting it running. We would like to thank the following volunteers who are already contributing data from their transect walks or have recently offered to become involved:- Annette Cross, Sharyn Broni, Lala Frazer, Mike Hazel, Leith Thompson, Jenny Winter, Shaun Murphy, Shantelle Jackson, Moira Parker, Neville Peat, David and Rose Swete-Kelly, Penny Kagan, Barbara Smith, Jane and Richard Higham, Ian Turnbull, Alun Baines, Carol Tippett, Peter and Evelyn Steers, Karen O’Neill, Dave and Belinda Lyttle, Rod Morris and Marcia Dale.

## **Funding**

The OPBG would like to acknowledge the support of the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board for funding possum control operations, possum monitoring traps and equipment, vegetation and bird monitoring programmes and Timms traps for the peninsula community.

## **Media Releases**

The following links can be followed to view recent media coverage

<http://www.ch9.co.nz/content/possum-control-operation-move-residential-areas-peninsula>

<http://www.odt.co.nz/news/dunedin/163419/control-work-taking-effect>

## **Contacts**

If you want further information about anything in the newsletter or the project don't hesitate to contact

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