

Possums sent packing from Otago Peninsula

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The Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Group is getting closer its goal of a possum-free peninsula. It is now waging war on possums in the “border areas”, where dense urban housing meets farmland. Acting OPBG operations manager Bruce Kyle said crews had been installing traps in the urban border areas between Portobello and Dunedin City since April.

They now had more than 200 traps deployed and had killed about 300 possums, thanks to the co-operation of local residents.

Mr Kyle said about 99% of people the group had approached to help had been both well informed about the project and were happy to help.

“[They are] fully supportive and enjoying seeing the birdlife in their gardens that is resulting from it all.”

He said the group would change its tactics over time, as the density of possums decreased. It would eventually use dogs to track down isolated possums.

It had also been testing a smartphone app people could use to alert Mr Kyle when their trap had a possum in it and needed emptying.

The app plan suffered a temporary set-back when high-tech and low-tech pest control methods collided.

“My smartphone got eaten by my new possum dog. It decided to start on phones instead.”

He said there were few “bugs” to iron out with the phone app but it would be a useful tool in the future.

He said there were some “hot spot” areas where there were high possum numbers but they were quite happy with the low numbers in Portobello. There were “intermediate densities” at Broad Bay and Macandrew Bay.