



Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Trust

Annual Report for the year ended 30 June, 2017

It is with pleasure that I present this, the eighth annual report of the Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Trust.

Trustees

This year saw some changes in the makeup of the Trust. Marita Eisenlohr and Brian Templeton were elected as trustees and Rhys Millar, who retired by rotation, was re-elected. Marita carried on from her voluntary role as minute secretary and her work maintaining the website and Facebook. The resignation of Matthew Anderson in October left a vacancy on the Board which has not been filled. In February, Brian Templeton was given leave of absence due to ill health.

Personnel

Sarah Irvine commenced her term as Project Manager in June 2016 and worked tirelessly in this role throughout the reporting period. Shortly after taking up the role, Sarah took charge of the very successful Backyard Biodiversity project. The Trust's secure financial position can be attributed largely to the many successful funding applications Sarah made during the year. Sarah organised or was involved in many successful community engagement activities and also contributed volunteer time to OPBG. The Board is very grateful to Sarah for her dedication to the work of OPBG.

When Sarah announced that she would not be seeking reappointment at the end of her first year because she planned to relocate to Owaka with her family, the position of Project Manager was advertised. We were fortunate to receive applications from several strong candidates and from these, offer the position to Dr Ursula Ellenberg who undertook an orientation period in June and July before commencing in the role on 1 August, 2017. Ursula has a strong background in research and project management.

Our Operations Manager, Bruce Kyle, continued to serve in this role throughout the reporting period and worked closely with Sarah to develop the 2017 Winter/Spring operation plan for Sector 4. Bruce has also worked closely with trustee Moira Parker in training and deploying trapping volunteers.

Volunteers

We are grateful to all the volunteers who contribute to every aspect of our project: governance, trapping, biodiversity outcome monitoring, chew card monitoring, track clearing, data collection and management, website and Facebook administration, and fundraising. This year has seen a significant increase in the contribution of volunteers, with a total of 7,360 volunteer hours being recorded. The greatest increase in hours has been in operational activities, including the deployment and checking of chew cards, community trapping and track clearing. We were fortunate to receive voluntary assistance from groups including ANZ staff, the Department of Conservation's 'Trail Crew', a group of international students sponsored by the Sinclair Wetlands and University of Otago Ecology students. In appreciation for their efforts we held a get together for volunteers at the Portobello Bowling Club in July and a barbecue at the Hoopers Inlet Hall in February. Both events were well attended.

Governance

In January the Board agreed to reinstate the Trust's original committee structure with operations, fundraising and communications committees being appointed. In addition, a strategic planning and risk management committee was appointed. The expectation was that these committees would meet monthly and provide brief reports to the monthly Board meetings. This arrangement is generally working well, with the committees dealing with much of the detailed work of the Trust.

Health and safety

The Health and Safety Policy & Procedures manual was revised in July to align it with the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) 2015, which came into effect on 4 April 2016. An audit of the manual was conducted in

September by Andrea McMillan, who commended the Trust for its proactive approach to health and safety. Recommendations Andrea made for improvements to the policy and procedures have been attended to as time has permitted. The Board is grateful to Andrea for undertaking the audit. Further revisions were made to the manual in early 2017 to align it with Department of Conservation health and safety policy, as required for the signing of a funding Deed of Grant. High visibility vests, wallet cards containing emergency contact information, and first aid kits were purchased for volunteers with generous support from the ANZ Staff Foundation.

Operations

A further milestone was reached by OPBG this year, with 12,000 possums removed from the Peninsula. Our possum control operations this year have focused on 'hotspots' in Sectors 1-4 including breeding areas, movement corridors, highly favourable habitat and habitat adjacent to uncontrolled areas (i.e. areas we don't have access to). In March, a management agreement was signed between OPBT and the Department of Conservation permitting OPBT to carry out possum control on Public Conservation Land on the Otago Peninsula.

An important element of our operations this year has been chew-card surveillance. Chew cards are used to detect reinvasion of areas where work has been carried out and to identify new locations for targeting control measures. The chew-card surveillance programme has been spearheaded by trustee Moira Parker in conjunction with Operations Manager Bruce Kyle and involving a large team of volunteers who deploy and check cards. The Board is very grateful to Moira for coordinating this work and to the many volunteers who have contributed.

Winter months are important for the implementation of intensive possum control efforts as highly mobile possums seek food and shelter. A major operation was planned for the winter and spring months of 2017, targeting Sandymount, Sandfly Bay, Boulder Beach and adjacent vegetation corridors, and involving the deployment of a network of Bait Safe bait stations. We are grateful to Darren Peters (Department of Conservation), Andrew Veale (University of Otago) and Andy Cox (retired Department of Conservation scientist) for their expert advice on the design of this project. The personnel for this project included our Operations Manager, Bruce Kyle, a field service contractor, two part time field assistants and volunteers arranged by the Department of Conservation and Department of Corrections. We were very fortunate to raise all of the funds required to implement this plan.

Reinvasion of the Peninsula by possums from the City is of concern. This year an innovative defence measure has been trialled, involving the conversion of farm fencing to provide a barrier to the movement of possums. Rabbit mesh and electric wires are attached to an existing farm fence. The behaviour of possums when encountering the 'aversion fence' is being monitored with trail cameras. We are grateful to the Otago Regional Council for funding this project, to Garth Cadzow for allowing us to modify his fences and Brian Templeton for contributing toward the cost of the cameras. We are extremely grateful to trustee Brendon Cross for undertaking the fence conversion and for the trustees and volunteers who assisted him.

Many volunteers and Peninsula land owners contribute to our operational activities. We would like to acknowledge the efforts of regular volunteer trappers Steve Ashton, Sol Wogan, Frank Pepers, Mike Lawson, John Aldis and Chris Hewitt, who together have trapped a significant proportion of the possums removed this year. The Board would again like to acknowledge the support received from Peninsula land owners; our project would not be possible without their willingness to provide continued access to their property.

Biodiversity outcome monitoring

With the support of the Otago Regional Council, reports were prepared on our monitoring data for birds, vegetation and rodents; a base-line survey of lizard species' relative abundance and distribution; and an inventory of beetles on the Peninsula. We are grateful to the authors of these reports: Richard Ewans, Deb Wilson, Carey Knox and John Nunn. On the recommendation of the rodent monitoring report, rodent monitoring has been discontinued because no increase in the abundance of rats was detected. We are grateful to Carol Tippet who coordinated the rodent monitoring project and to trustee Moira Parker who manages the biodiversity outcome monitoring programme.

Community engagement

Our very successful Backyard Biodiversity educational programme, funded by MBIE (Curious Minds), was rolled out in eleven schools (nine Peninsula) in August and September, with Carol Tippet as educator. Posters prepared by children participating in the programme were displayed at the Otago Museum. We are grateful to

our partners in this project: the Department of Conservation for arranging tertiary student volunteers assigned to schools as 'Backyard Biodiversity Buddies' and Dragonfly who developed and operated the 'Tooth and claw' data entry site.

A rat and stoat trap library was set up in December as a resource for members of the community requesting assistance with these pests. A trapping workshop held at the Macandrew Bay hall in June was very well attended and resulted in eleven new volunteers being recruited, with seven interested in trapping. We are grateful to the trustees and volunteers who demonstrated the devices on display: Louise Ashton (Timms traps), John Aldis (Possum Masters), Bev Dickson (rat traps), Sol Wogan (cage and leghold traps), John Parker (DOC 200s), Olivia from Farmlands (Goodnature A12s and A24s) and Moira Parker (chew cards).

We are very grateful to trustee Marita Eisenlohr for maintaining our OPBG website and Facebook page, and for producing our quarterly OPBG newsletters which are distributed to an ever-increasing circulation list. A popular feature of the newsletters this year has been the showcasing of some of our hard working volunteers.

Many other forms of engagement with the community occurred during the year, as the following - probably incomplete - list shows. Media publicity included Rural Delivery (TV1) items on OPBG and trustee Brendon Cross's farming practices, and articles in New Scientist, NZ Today, New Zealand Farmer, Otago Daily Times and the Star newspaper. Presentations were made at an Ecology Symposium held at Orokonui Sanctuary and at the 2016 NZ Ecological Society Conference. Displays and information stands were set up at the Portobello Market, Otago Museum (Conservation Week), Portobello Blues Festival, and at the Wild Dunedin Festival Urban Nature Expo at Woodhaugh gardens and Otago Peninsula Trust 'Festival' at Glenfalloch. We hosted visits by the Hon Michael Woodhouse MP, a team from the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, a Citizen Science Projects Tour group and an Otago University Advanced School Sciences Academy student group. Submissions were made on the Dunedin City Council's 'Park and Reserves Strategy', the review of Otago Regional Council's 'Pest Management Strategy for Otago 2009' and the DCC and ORC 2017/2018 Annual Plans. Partnerships were established with Forest and Bird who are undertaking a restoration project at Sandymount for seabird recovery and the Quarantine Island community who are undertaking a rodent eradication programme.

Funding

A record \$267,000 was raised in the reporting period. We are grateful to the many funding agencies that have supported our project with grants this year, including ANZ Staff Foundation, Bendigo Valley Foundation, Department of Conservation Community Fund, Dunedin Casino Charitable Trust, Dunedin City Council Biofund, The Lion Foundation, Lottery Grants Board, Otago Community Trust and Harry J Wilson Trust. Highlights were our successful application to the Department of Conservation Community Fund for support for our Project Manager until the end of 2018 and the full funding of the 2017 Winter/Spring operation.

Trustee fundraising and donations also made a welcome contribution to our work this year. The inaugural OPBG fundraising calendar was a resounding success. We are grateful to the twelve sponsors who contributed to the publication costs and to the photographers who contributed their work for this stunning calendar. We are especially grateful to trustees Marita Eisenlohr, Rod Morris and Moira Parker, who promoted this fundraising campaign and undertook the production and marketing of the calendar. We are grateful also to trustees Brendon Cross, Ally Cambell and others for undertaking fencing projects and cutting, splitting and storing firewood for sale in summer. Finally, we are very grateful to Virginia Driver for persuading her father Peter Garden, NZOM, to give a public lecture at the Macandrew Bay School on his work over many years as an eradication helicopter pilot in New Zealand and overseas. Peter's talk was fascinating and the door takings were donated to OPBG.

Predator Free Dunedin

In September 2016, the Government announced an ambitious plan to rid New Zealand of possums, rats and stoats by 2050. Known as Predator Free 2050, this programme will receive \$7 million of new funding each year for four years, which will be used to invest in large-scale, collaborative projects. Predator Free Dunedin is a partnership of nineteen stakeholders set up with a view to benefiting from Government resources allocated for implementation of Predator Free 2050. We were represented on the Predator Free Dunedin partnership by Brendon Cross and David Chalmers, and trustees Hoani Langsbury and Rhys Miller are co-chairs and spokespersons for the partnership. OPBT was a signatory to a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the partners on 16 March at Orokonui Ecosanctuary in the presence of the Prime Minister. Since that time a scoping report for a 'Dunedin Predator Management Plan' has been prepared and \$48,000 secured for development of the plan. OPBT is recognised by Predator Free Dunedin as a flagship organisation and we stand to benefit from any Government investment in the partnership.

Developments since the end of the reporting period

The 2017 Winter/Summer operation has been running for four months and to date an estimated 569 Possums have been killed. As of 30 September, 13,066 possums been removed from the Peninsula. As a result of a successful expression of interest, Sarah Irvine prepared and submitted a full application to the Department of Conservation Community Fund 2017 funding round for \$80,000 for a part-time volunteer coordinator position. The Dunedin City Council has confirmed that it will financially support general pest control undertaken by OPBG for the next three years at \$10,000/year. City Forests has awarded us a grant of \$3,500. The Predator Free Dunedin partnership submitted an expression of interest to Predator Free 2050 Ltd on 13 October, which aims to achieve predator free status over 30,000 hectares of Dunedin City including the Peninsula. The 2018 OPBG Calendar is on sale.

The year ahead

The coming year will bring many challenges for the Trust, including the ambitious goal of completing the possum control project, designing a multi-species predator control strategy, and raising funds to support our management team from February 2019. The expression of interest submitted by the Predator Free Dunedin partnership may reward us with the capacity to increase our possum control effort in the coming year but if the partnership is invited to submit a full application in January, a great deal of effort will be required by us in the lead-up to Christmas.

As I will not be seeking re-election as Chair for another term, I would like to thank all Trustees for the time and energy they have contributed towards achieving our vision of a pest-free Peninsula and for the support they have given me. I would especially like to thank those office bearers with whom I have worked most closely, Moira, Marita and Laurie; Bev who has worked with me in the health and safety area; and Sarah, Bruce and Ursula our management team over the past twelve months.



David Chalmers
Chair
Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Trust