



Predator-free Port Hills

June 2018 Newsletter

It's now that time of year when natural food sources reduce, making freshly baited traps all the more tempting.

It's also a great time of year to do some planting. The best plants are those that provide forage for birds and bees.

This month the Garden Bird Survey is coming up, as well as voting for finalists from our kids t-shirt design competition, a trapping workshop, and a trap box building day. We also have our second catch totals report, and a host of other updates.

Thank you to everyone who has been updating TrapNZ (<https://www.trap.nz/>) with their trap records.

PFPH Pest Totals*	
Possums	117
Mustelids	1
Rats	69
Mice	102
Hedgehogs	32
Magpies	1
Unspecified	10
Total	332

*Since 1 Feb 2018



Take Part in the Garden Bird Survey 30th June to 8th July

We often get focused on trapping, but it's also good to remember why we do it, so as well as counting the number of pests caught, we are also interested in how birdlife changes over time. It's actually quite important to do these counts now, so that we have a good baseline to measure changes over time against.

The Garden Bird Survey is an important citizen science project run by Landcare Research to monitor distribution and detect population trends in garden birds. Spend just one hour watching birds in your garden

and recording the highest number of each species you see or hear at one time.

There are lots of tips and resources available on the Garden Bird Survey website, including fun activities for kids:

<https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/science/plants-animals-fungi/animals/birds/garden-bird-surveys>

Past surveys show that some bird populations have dramatically declined over the last 10 years. The most spectacular decline has been for the silvereye, the most common native bird in our gardens, which has declined by 44% nationally.



Predator-free Port Hills

PFPH T-shirt Design Competition – Get Your Votes In by 15 June

Entries are in for our kids t-shirt design competition. Voting is open now and closes on June 15th. Support the kids that entered their awesome designs by liking their entries on the PFPH Facebook page.

<https://web.facebook.com/PredatorFreePortHills/>

Congratulations to our young entrants:

- Jasmine Heffer, age 7
- Chloe Drinkwater, age 8
- Emily Rose Heffer, age 9
- Nina Wilke, age 9
- Isla Cook & Naomi Wilson, age 10
- Willow Cook, age 12



Trapping Workshop June 30th, Hosted by DOC, Mt Vernon & PFPH

If you want to upskill on trapping, a free trapping workshop is being at St Martins School on June 30th from 1pm to 3pm. See the PFPH Facebook page for more details.

This trapping workshop follows on from our trapping evening last month, where Sam from Goodnature and Darren, the head of predator control from DOC, kindly spoke about their trapping experience and answered our questions; after we all enjoyed some pizza.

Predator-free Port Hills

Free trapping workshop

Date 30th June 2018
Time 1:00pm to 3:00pm
Location St Martins School Hall
More info vmander@doc.govt.nz

Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Mt Vernon Park
PORT HILLS PARK TRUST

The greatest threat to our native birds are introduced predators: rats, ferrets, stoats, weasels, possums and hedgehogs.

This free workshop introduces novices to the basics of trapping and tips to help experienced trappers get better results. Refreshments provided.



A key takeaway from the evening was trap placement. Possums are a bit like a koala, they prefer to climb trees that they can wrap their arms around, and a sloping tree is



Predator-free Port Hills

easier too, so for best results place your traps on trees that suit them.



Traps should be about a metre off the ground to minimize the chances of catching other animals.

Also, unlike rats, possums are curious. They will be attracted to bright and novel things. In addition to a nice white Trapinator box, you can use lure on the tree below the trap to entice them towards the trap. It's best to use lures that aren't attractive to other animals – a mixture of flour, icing sugar, and a spice like cinnamon is good for this.



Trapinator possum trap on a sloping tree with flour-icing sugar-cinnamon blaze of lure below, in addition to the bait in the trap

Trap Box Building Day July 29th – Volunteers Needed

We will also be hosting a trap box building day with Conservation Volunteers NZ on July 29th from 10am to 3pm.

We will be building wooden tunnels and boxes. Volunteers needed!

Please contact the Summit Road Society Secretary, Marie Gray, to register your interest (see contact details at the bottom of this newsletter).

We have a possible venue lined up, but are just waiting to have it confirmed – we will be

in touch via email, or keep an eye on the PFPH Facebook page for updates.



We'd like to make wooden tunnels similar to these



Predator-free Port Hills

Local Coordinators BBQ

At the beginning of last month we also had a BBQ for the Local Coordinators from each Predator Free Port Hills area.

This was a great opportunity for everyone to share ideas, chat and get to know each other over a cuppa and BBQ dinner. Some coordinators are getting great results, and it was great to hear how they are doing it.



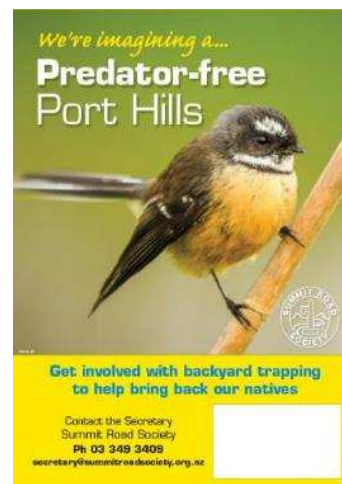
Sponsorship & Funding

As mentioned in our last newsletter, we need to get more funds before we can buy more traps and expand further. We are currently waiting to hear back from the Rata Foundation on the result of our funding application.

As well as applying for grants, we are also looking for sponsorship from businesses. If you know of any local businesses who might be open to giving a financial donation, no matter how small, please let us know.

We have posters that they can put up to show that they are supporting us, either as

a financial sponsor or simply support us by displaying our poster.



PFPH posters available to give out

Trap Arrangements – Transition to Trap Library 30th September

Our new trap management proposal has had good feedback, we have made a few changes as a result, and will be moving forward with a new arrangement. A trap library will be set up, which will have traps available for short term loan so people can try them out. They will then be able to purchase a subsidized trap.

People with existing loan traps will need to transition by 30 September - you will have the option of purchasing your trap(s) or returning them to the trap library. Those who paid bonds for more expensive traps will be able to use this bond to buy the if they want – no further payment will be required.



Predator-free Port Hills

Predators Caught - TrapNZ

Trap catches have been up, with 175 pests caught in April and May, compared with 157 caught in February and March. A great effort yet again!

Over three hundred pests have been removed from the environment since PFPH's records officially began at the start of February. There are now 313 traps recorded on TrapNZ - that's 96 new traps in the last two months.

Catch totals from TrapNZ over the last four months are summarized below:

Pest Type	Feb/Mar	Apr/May	Total
Possum	73	44	117
Mustelid	0	1	1
Rat	26	43	69
Mouse	38	64	102
Hedgehog	19	13	32
Magpie	1	0	1
Unspecified	0	10	10
Total	157	175	332

The higher totals of rats and mice may be due to the change in the seasons - autumn is a great time for trapping as natural food sources start to decline. Possums on the other hand are a bit like our pet cats – they prefer to stay warm and dry and don't get out and about as much in bad weather¹.

The most active groups are Huntsbury, Cashmere and Halswell – well done!

Pest catch totals by suburb are as follows:

PFPH Group	Feb/Mar	Apr/May	Total
Huntsbury	63	34	97
Cashmere	7	56	63
Halswell	18	34	52
Diamond Harbour	24	19	43
Teddington	33	5	38
Governors Bay	6	13	19
Heathcote Valley	4	6	10
Westmorland	1	5	6
Lyttelton	1	3	4
Total	157	175	332

You may have noticed that the totals for Feb/March are higher than reported in the last newsletter. This is because records with multiple strikes weren't counted – sorry. The good news is that we have more catches than we thought. We also haven't yet included Sumner's totals. They have been very active, and their totals will be included next time.

If you have a trap please make sure that you have logged your trap's status – this includes reporting that your trap has caught nothing. You can do this using the TrapNZ website or the TrapNZ app, or your Local Coordinator can update TrapNZ for you. If you don't know who your Local Coordinator is, please contact Marie or Adrian (see end of newsletter for contact details).

¹ A result of the editor's observations, rather than published research



Predator-free Port Hills

Summit Road Society Mid-Winter Dinner, Sign of the Kiwi, June 30th

Come along for a mid-winter dinner at the Sign of the Kiwi, on Saturday June 30th at 7pm, with a three course meal for \$45. This dinner is hosted by the Summit Road Society, and Predator Free Port Hills members are more than welcome to come along.

Please contact the Summit Road Society Secretary, Marie, to book your spot by June 15th (contact details at the bottom of this newsletter).



PFPH Trapper Profile

My name is Nicky Arts, I live in Huntsbury, bordering the Huntsbury Reserve.

I began trapping possums in 2001 - they were eating my fruit trees bare, leaving me none. I used two Timms traps for many years and have only recently swapped over to a Goodnature A12 possum trap. I also use a live cage trap. So far this year I've caught 40 possums. I also trap for rats using a DOC 200 trap.

My favourite bait for possums is apple with a small drop of aniseed oil. I swap around a wee bit between aniseed oil, curry, oil of roses and peanut butter on the apple. Experiment with the baits, your possums may have different tastes! Possums love roses - hence the oil of roses. I also make up a flour-icing sugar lure.

Nicky's Lure Recipe

3 cups flour
¾ cup icing sugar
1tsp oil of roses

Mix ingredients, shake and store in an air tight jar. Sprinkle around possum and rat traps regularly.



I was "nominated" earlier this year for the task of Huntsbury Local Coordinator, together with John Howard. One of our aims is to start trapping in and around Huntsbury Reserve. This is going to be a mammoth task and is still on the "going to do" list as we await funds, traps and a clear strategy along with CCC approval.

Huntsbury has a very dedicated group of trappers, many of whom are long term residents. It has made my task easy. We



Predator-free Port Hills

have “Joe the Rat Man” (249 rats in 16 yrs). We are catching rats, mice, hedgehogs and possums. There have been some stoat sightings but no catches yet!

It takes a while to find out what are the best spots for your traps. Trial and error, I’m afraid. The possums leave obvious signs, like droppings, claw marks on trees, and trails. Rats are much trickier - compost heaps, hedge lines, and fences are all good starting points.

We are beginning to collect catch data from our trappers and hope to start monitoring pest populations with chew cards and tracking tunnels soon.

There is a lot to do, but I feel that every little bit helps and it might mean that next year I can get some peaches off my tree. Rumour has it that one resident lower down the hill has had some plums for the first time in 20 years, so maybe I am making a difference.

Canterbury Raptor Rescue Needs Your Help

Canterbury Raptor Rescue are keen for mice (not rats) for their owls. So if you are catching mice in your traps, pop them in a container in the freezer and when full, contact Canterbury Raptor Rescue to pass on. Please note that the area they were caught in must be free of poisons.

Phone 021 292 7861 or email obr@xtra.co.nz. Also, known as Oxford Bird Rescue, they have a website and Facebook page www.oxfordbirdrescue.org.nz.



A Little Owl with an eye injury in the care of Canterbury Raptor Rescue

Good Luck with Your Trapping!

Remember that it’s important to humanely kill any animals caught in live capture traps or injured in a trap, in a manner not prolonging pain and suffering.

Please be in touch any time, with ideas and news. We are also always looking for help from volunteers.

From all of us at Predator Free Port Hills, we hope your trapping is going well.

Your PFPH Steering Group, Adrian, Gina, Jeremy, Marie, Melanie, and Myles.



A Goodnature A24 rat trap, ready to catch rats



Predator-free Port Hills

Contacts

General Information:

Predator Free Port Hills Website:

<http://www.summitroadsociety.org.nz/> and click on the PFPH tab

PFPH Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/PredatorFreePortHills/>

Predator Free Port Hills Facebook Group:

<https://web.facebook.com/groups/168327740491153/>

PFPH Donations:

<https://givealittle.co.nz/cause/predator-free-port-hills/donations>

General Enquiries for the Summit Road Society:

Marie Gray - SRS Secretary -

summitroadsocietysecretary@gmail.com

Ph: (03) 349 3409

Admin and trapping questions:

In the first instance, please contact your Local Coordinator, or PFPH Admin (checked by Adrian Heath or Marie) - predatorfreeportHills@gmail.com

PFPH Posters:

Please contact Marie or Jeremy Agar:

Marie Gray - PFPH Steering Group & SRS Secretary -

summitroadsocietysecretary@gmail.com

Jeremy Agar – PFPH Steering Group & SRS Vice President –

jeremyagar@xtra.co.nz

