



a passion for the Port Hills

SUMMIT ROAD SOCIETY: 71st PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2019

Once again it is a pleasure to present my report for the 2019 year. It seems such long time ago as we are almost three quarters of the way through this year and with so many things happening it is hard to remember what actually happened last year.

Nevertheless I will try to remember significant happenings that show your Society has been keeping up the good work to fulfil its Passion for the Port Hills.

Tragedy struck the Society with the passing of our dedicated board member Hamish Grant due to a terrible accident. Hamish provided the Society with free legal services to obtain purchase of the Linda Woods Reserve. Hamish's dedication to the principles of Harry Ell with maintaining the free access to the Port Hills and the installation of the webcam on the Gondola will be remembered for a very long time.

We still continue to miss his wise counsel and energetic contribution to the efficiency of the Board. Riding his bicycle along the Summit Road and enjoying the vista was one of his favourite pastimes.

The Board finally agreed to construct a lookout in the carpark at Ohinetahi opposite the Bellbird as the view from this spot down the harbour is one of the finest on the Port Hills. It had been a longtime dream of John Jameson to reconstruct the existing carpark into a well-designed feature that would become a must-visit place attracting visitors and itself be a focal point that those visitors be able to spend a little time enjoying not only the view but the pleasant surroundings of this special place.

Graham Densem the landscape architect is heading the project along with a few of his colleagues. The Port Hills Rangers are in support and the City Council. This project as it becomes more known will encourage more visitors to the Port Hills. The Society Board believed that it would be fitting to pay tribute to the man who believed in the value of the Port Hills and what they have to offer in both scenic, conservation and activity values. It will be named after the man whose vision and enthusiasm for the protection of the Port Hills founded our Society and called the John Jameson Lookout.

The local body elections came and went with the result of two new representatives from both the City and Selwyn Councils.

We welcome Jackie Simonds from the Linwood-Central-Heathcote Community Board and Jeff Bland from Selwyn District Council. Both of these people have already shown a passion for the work of the Society. They join Lee Sampson and Tyrone Fields as our local government representatives. We are extremely lucky to have these dedicated people in the governance team of the Society.

The annual work party and City Council end-of-year barbeque was held at the back of the 19th Battalion Memorial with good attendance in fine weather. The camaraderie of all concerned was obvious and a good time was held by all.

Arbor Day was again held on Latters Spur and thanks must go to the Eastenders and Di Carter and her team for the preparation and follow up work. To see the children getting stuck in and having a good time is really rewarding.

The midwinter annual dinner was again a success. It was agreed that the Sign of the Kiwi, even though it is subject to the weather, is the best place to hold this function until it becomes too small to accommodate the numbers attending. The food is good at reasonable prices. The owners have indicated that they want to do more to promote the Society.

It has now become the custom for the Work Party Leaders to present their individual reports to the AGM plus a separate report for the Linda Woods Reserve as we have yet to decide to establish a work party system for this reserve.

The Predator Free Port Hills programme is going from strength to strength exceeding all expectations of support. Our Vice President Jeremy Agar who is responsible for initiating this programme will give a far more detailed account of the progress so far. Special thanks must go to Jeremy for his drive and commitment to this project.

Special thanks must also go to the leaders and members of our work parties, Anne Kennedy of Ohinetahi, Graeme Paltridge of the Eastenders and Ian Johnston of Omahu for their continued work over the past year.

The achievements of these three are greatly enhanced by the loyal volunteers that willingly give of their time to be part of our work parties. We are ever mindful of the contribution they make in the work of the Society.

It must not go unmentioned the work that is put in by Greg Gimblett and his team on pest control in both Ohinetahi and Omahu.

Greg has developed a very sophisticated system of bait stations and recording successful trapping. I did ask Greg to be our speaker for our AGM before the Covid-19 lockdown forced the cancellation of that meeting. I am hoping that Greg will agree to give us a presentation at next year's AGM, a presentation that I am personally really looking forward to.

Another person that needs mentioning for his work at Omahu is Graham Corbishley who is heading the feral animal control and fencing program at Omahu. Graham's previous employment entailed the building of hydro Dams in Indonesia and Chile and he is applying the same dedication to excellence to the Omahu projects.

You may have been aware that we did some necessary initial replacement fencing at Omahu and decided to install deer fencing to keep out both deer and pigs that were causing significant damage to the vegetation of the bush area.

These animals have increased in numbers since the Port Hills fire, forcing the decision to control them from entering the bush where the damage is so noticeable.

A decision was made to complete the fencing as soon as possible but that would take some time and money so a couple of traps were made up to capture pigs and have proved to be successful so far until the fencing is complete and eradication can take place.

I think it is notable to mention that these traps are so sophisticated that Graham can view and set them off from his house to save travelling every day the considerable distance to inspect the traps.

We have been lucky in finding some friendly sponsors to help with the fencing costs so the completion of the fencing should be done by the end of 2020 and will be acknowledged and appropriately thanked at the completion of the present program.

Once again we are humbled by the number of volunteer hours put in by members and friends of the Society a staggering 12,944 recorded hours were given during the 2019 year. The number of unrecorded hours remains a mystery but it is certain it will be substantial.

Membership is slightly down to 337 due mainly to people moving out of Christchurch or have passed away.

No report would be complete without mentioning the support of the Park Rangers. Not only Paul Devlin and Nick Singleton but Di Carter, Hamish Masters, Matt Rose and Phil Crutchley. There are others as well who readily give time to assist us. We are always grateful for their help and guidance.

My thanks goes to Jeremy Agar Vice president who again has proven his loyalty to both myself and the Society. Although he did have us a little worried about his health when he had that unfortunate encounter with a pole outside the Post Office on Ferry Road. Still like the trouper he is, he soon bounced back to his normal self.

As a Society, you can be proud of the fact that you have been well served by the members of the board who have tackled all the problems and issues that faced them and believe me we have had more than our share, with drive and above all passion.

The Board has been fortunate to be assisted by a very capable secretary in Marie who keeps everything up to date and is always presenting ideas and suggestions to make the work of Society more achievable. We thank you Marie, for a job well done.

Bill Woods
President
September 2020

OHINETAHI RESERVE ANNUAL REPORT 2019

Ohinetahi Work Party Report

2019 began with the work party busy taming the rampant growth of the spring of 2018 with the weedeaters still busy. Under the guidance of Greg Gimblett, trap lines were being set up throughout the reserve.

Our Old Mans Beard eradication efforts began on the 29th January and continued throughout February for a total of 270 person hours. Other weeds such as passionvine, spur valerian, cotoneaster and spindleberry are continually being dealt with as we tidy up tracks.

Weedeating and track clearance commenced again at the end of March until the end of April. North Boundary, Faulkners and Wai-iti tracks received a good tidy up in June.

July and August were spent planting over 1000 trees and releasing around existing plantings. This brought the total of trees planted since the fire to about 7000.

Polypodium on Bush Road Track kept us busy for two days. This was cut and pulled off rock faces and buried. This exotic fern is a tough character and will have to be kept under continual surveillance if it is not to become the huge problem that spur valerian has.

Then it was Spring and the grass was growing madly again and the weedeaters were again in action from the middle of October until the end of December with the rest of the team clearing back trees from the tracks and tackling the broom. We have tried twice to introduce the broom gall mite to help contain the scotch broom but so far have had no success. Montpellier broom has also become widespread since the fires.

With the guidance of Ranger Di Carter, the battle with Spur Valerian has been continued with volunteer group Vertical Weedbusters abseiling down the bluffs and spraying this pest.

Only 2 days were lost to rain in 2019.

To the cheerful team that carry out this maintenance in the reserve, a huge thank you. Your continual cheerfulness and willingness are fantastic.

*Anne Kennedy
September 2020*

Ohinetahi Predator Control Report

Our trap network has increased significantly this year and now consists of 224 traps spread across the Reserve from Cass Ridge to Watlings track taking in Titoki and Ngaio tracks. Our thanks go to Forest and Bird North Canterbury for a grant for traps. There is also a trap line within the southern end of the reserve, Orongomai. We have a full suite of traps types, DOC 200, Victor rat traps, Fenn, Timms and Sentinel possum traps, plus the Goodnature self-setting traps.

We aim to continue adding to the trap network to best practice in 2020 as funds allow, taking in all the vegetated parts of the Reserve as far north as Faulkner's track, and expand the existing

trap network to the south. Tracks in open, un-vegetated areas will also be targeted for mustelids, with placement of additional DOC150 and 200 traps.

Monthly checking is undertaken across 6 trap runs by a group of hardy volunteers, Helen Hills & Robin Collie, Brian Boyes, Russell Genet, Matthew Hellicar, Derek & Gill Crombie, and Merv Meredith who joined in December. Some 445 hours of volunteer hours were recorded for the year. The Reserve is very steep so we are very grateful for the work they do. As the network increases we will be looking for more volunteers to take on a trap run, and be responsible for monthly trap checks.

For the 2019 year, 193 predators have been removed. Many of the traps were installed over the course of the year so do not represent 12 months of being in place. We are already seeing the effect of the increased trapping density, particularly in regards to rats and weasels. A recent open track trap line along Ellas track and Totara Log track has seen a large number of weasels caught.

The first monitoring was undertaken in October 2019 to determine relative predator abundance during the bird fledgling period. PAI (pest abundance index) is determined by predator interaction with a peanut butter (or aniseed) impregnated corflute 'chew cards' placed out for 5 – 7 nights in a line of 10 cards at 20m spacing. Four such lines were placed through the Reserve to get a measure of Predator numbers. The number of interactions (bites) helps us determine the relative abundance of predators. PAI (Rat) was 7% - although we only picked up rat sign in Bivvy track –where 8 of the 10 cards were chewed by rats. PAI (Possum) was 7% or an RTC of 1.3 (another index) – which indicates low population at the time, reflected in our trapping numbers.

We propose to repeat this monitoring regularly to help us build up a better understanding of predator numbers in Ohinetahi. Placement of ink tracking tunnels (for rats and mice numbers) is also proposed to help build up data on relative predator numbers. Trap catch is not always a reliable measure of predators as rats in particular become trap shy.

Thanks again to all the team, and all those SRS members who have been involved with predator control at Ohinetahi over the many years leading up to today. Again a special mention to Mike White, Tony Edney and Robin Collie. These are the guys that started trapping in Ohinetahi some years ago.

Greg Gimblett
August 2020

EASTENDERS WORK PARTY REPORT 2019

It was a pleasing and satisfying year of Eastenders work parties for 2019. Of the 20 potential work parties only three were cancelled due to bad weather, quite an improvement over the previous year. With the 17 worked, there was an average of 12 volunteers per work party (max 17, min 8) plus Parks & Reserves Ranger Hamish Masters and a seasonal summer student. I have around 50 volunteers on my email listing although only around 15-20 are regulars.

The furthest west we worked was near the Sign of the Kiwi, Mitchells Track and Latters Spur and eastwards it was the Taylors Mistake Track. In between, work parties were held variously on the Captain Thomas Track, tracks around the Gondola, the Eastenders Track, Hidden Valley Track (off Bowenvale Track) and Jollies and Rapanui Bush Reserves. Our work was mainly track maintenance (clearing, benching, levelling, drainage) and vegetation control, particularly encroaching gorse and broom. At Latters Spur, we again dug a few hundred holes in preparation for Arbor Day tree planting by school children.

Of interest was a new Council track we formed. Dubbed the Kowhai Track, it runs at right angles from near the beginning of the ever popular Rapaki Track. We cut and benched a route to near the top of Montgomery Spur Reserve only to be told that the correct paperwork had not been completed which has left it in a state of limbo. Once all approval boxes get ticked we will continue this track over the top of the Spur and link into the Society's new Linda Woods Reserve.

We also had our first work party on Linda Woods Reserve. ECAN had reminded the Society that there was residual Nassella tussock infestation and that it needed regular control. I had a field meeting with an ECAN ranger to familiarise myself and we found a few plants. Confident with my newfound knowledge I organised an Eastenders party to do battle. Seventeen of us swept a large hillside and found nothing! The day was, however, compensated with good weather and glorious views (we have subsequently had Nassella "training" workparty near Evans Pass and in the company of a Ranger familiar with the tussock we found over 80 plants).

I would like to thank the input of all the volunteers that assist with the Eastenders work parties. They put in many hundreds of hours each year to improving the tracks and Reserves on the Port Hills that might not have otherwise been regularly maintained. I also thank Hamish Masters, Council Parks and Reserves Ranger who accompanies us on most of our work parties, advises us of any practical requirements, keeps a safety eye on proceedings and is the supplier of chocolate biscuits for smoko break! He is also barbeque master at the end of year Xmas get together. Finally, my thanks to the SRS Secretary, Marie for her excellent organisational abilities and President Bill Woods for his infectious enthusiasm.

Graeme Paltridge
September 2020

OMAHU BUSH ANNUAL REPORT 2019

Omahu Bush Work Party Report

Last year the Omahu group worked 777 hours on about 22 work days plus a few extra days spraying and weed-eating tracks. Our normal team of 5-10 workers meet on the 1st & 3rd Fridays. In the latter part of the year we started Wednesday work days to clear the steep section of the Wilson boundary fence.

The fence on the lower grazing paddock was repaired and made sheep proof to keep the sheep away from the lower section while the fences on the Wilson boundary were removed to make ready for the new deer fence in the New Year. A large digger was hired to clear old tracks and fence lines. We now have track access around the entire bush and grazing blocks.

A lot of work party time was spent clearing vegetation to widen Rhodes and Prendergast tracks to allow the fencing contractors better access as well as clearing gorse, blackberry, elderberry and other pest species.

Another 80 trees were planted in the area next to the existing plantings by the Gibraltar Rock access gate.

The access track to the stock yards was upgraded with culverts cleared or replaced as necessary. The stock yard fences and gates were also repaired to make them useable again. Tom Magill has carried on with the lease of the grazing paddock and at the last count all his stock was accounted for he is happy to carry on with the lease.

Many thanks to Greg who has taken over the pest control side of Omahu and to Graham for organising the new deer fencing project. The use of Bill's Kubota has been invaluable for the fencing and other work around the area.

I am very grateful to all our volunteers who turn on a regular basis every work party to maintain the reserve in great condition.

Ian Johnston
May 2020

Omahu Predator Control Report

The Predator Control team of Greg Gimblett, Graham & Tracey Corbishley, Brent Williams, Jeff Hall and Matthew Hellicar were joined by Allan Brent in December. We had a busy year putting in approximately 740 volunteer hours. The previous year we recorded 300 hours.

The trap network has expanded to 250 traps as a result of donations and a grant from the Mainland Foundation. We established new trap routes across the reserve to complete the desired trap network densities across the majority of the vegetated portion of the 80ha reserve.

Trap catch for 2019 was a total of 342 predators removed from the reserve, up from 191 in the previous 12 months. A significant increase in the number of mice, weasels and stoats caught was noticed in the last 6 months.

We again undertook 7-day chewcard monitoring across the Reserve in May to determine relative predator population sizes. This involves the placement of 4 lines of 10 corflute cards (impregnated with a lure) at 20m centres throughout the reserve. This exercise revealed a PAI (Pest Abundance Index) of 48% for possum and 50% for rats. In other words 50% of the cards were interacted with by rats and 48% by possums.

The Residual Trap Catch (RTC – a possum population index) was measured at 7.9, up from the previous measure of 5 in Oct 2018. At this level it is not considered that the possum population will have detrimental effect on the bush health, but they remain a significant predator on bird populations.

After seeking advice from the CCC and DOC, we undertook a poisoning programme across the Reserve in August and September with funds received from the Sargood Bequest Fund. Approximately 80 bait stations were installed across the Reserve at 100m centres, into which we placed a nontoxic pre-feed to induce feeding for 2 weeks followed up with placement of the toxin Cholecalciferol for 3 weeks.

Post poison monitoring was undertaken in October and our PAI for Possum dropped to 5% and or Rat PAI was at 0%. We installed a network of 40 tracking tunnels (TT) across the reserve and followed up with the installation of ink cards overnight to determine rat populations using this standardised method. This came back at 5% for rats, our principal target predator. Of the 40 cards, 2 cards were trafficked by rats. Mice were at 15%, an increase which was mirrored in our trap catch and may have explained the increase in mustelid catch in the last 6 months. Rats' interaction of 5% of TT (in breeding season) is considered a level that should assure a successful breeding season for the birds that populate Omahu Bush.

As grants, funding and more volunteers become available it is intended to continue to expand the network into the adjoining grazing block, and to extend the network along the newly formed perimeter deer fence.

Greg Gimblett
August 2020

Omahu Bush Feral Animal Management Programme Report

Feral deer, goats, and pigs (feral ungulates) have been in residence on various parts of the Port Hills and Banks Peninsula for decades. Their impact adversely affects native flora and fauna and the animal populations can increase very quickly, compounding the problem. Protecting a Reserve from feral ungulates is not an easy job and one of the highest priorities is to complete a perimeter feral animal fence around Omahu and Otahuna Reserves so that eradication of any remaining feral ungulates within the fenced perimeter can then be carried out followed by ongoing monitoring and further control work as necessary to help ensure they stay out. The perimeter fence is primarily a deer fence, but it will incorporate various "smart" features to help further inhibit any potential ungulate infiltrations in the future.

This work is being done in collaboration with Otahuna Reserve to the north and private landowners to the south and once completed, the perimeter fence will help to protect a combined area of more than 300 hectares of precious native biodiversity and will also enable various biodiversity enhancement options to be initiated within the reserves in the future.

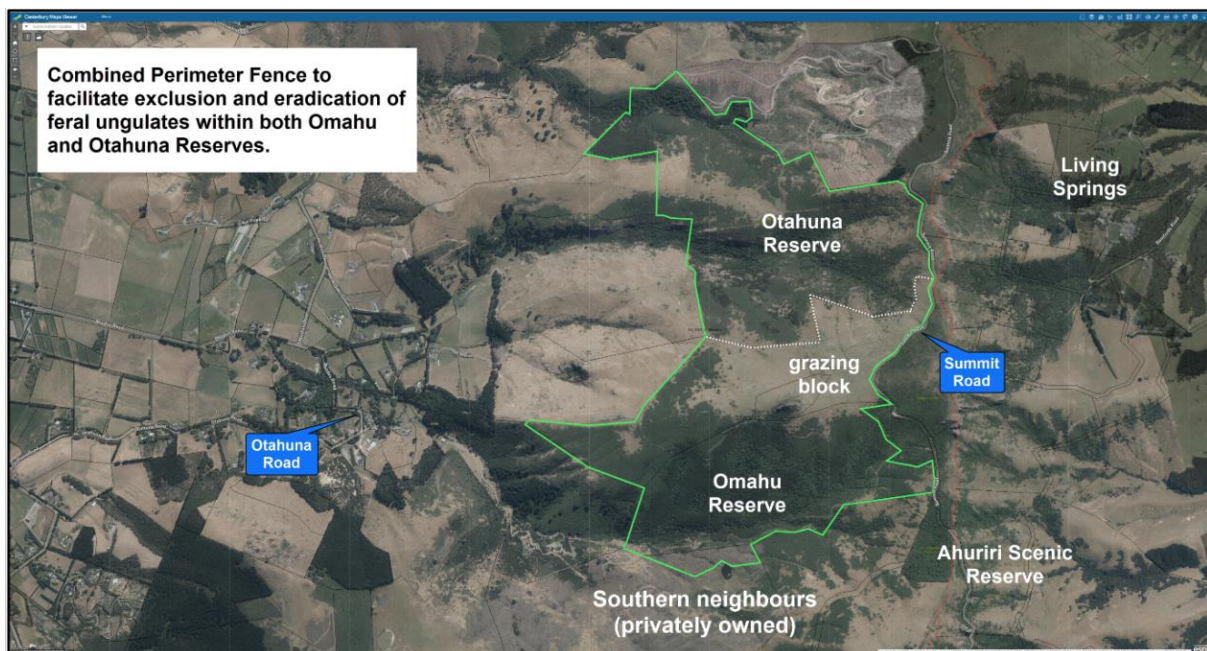
The Gama Foundation gifted Omahu Bush and Gibraltar Rock to the Society in 2010 and have agreed to pay for new or improved fencing along the boundaries of this 146-hectare Reserve. We also received a grant in 2019 from the Selwyn District Council towards feral pig traps.

We are also truly fortunate to be able to do this work in collaboration with two like-minded neighbours, so the wider benefits will be significant, particularly for the protection of the remnant podocarp/hardwood forest. The project has generated a significant amount of work for volunteers, particularly clearing vegetation along parts of the new fence lines, but there is no shortage of enthusiasm to see this project completed.

A fencing contractor has been appointed and the first bulk order for fencing materials was placed in December 2019. All fencing within Omahu Reserve should be completed by the end of 2020.

Fences like this can be visually intrusive initially but that impact should soften over time after grass seed is sown, and natives start to regenerate. The value in the fence is to help protect the Reserve for the future, but the work does not stop once the fence is completed.

Graham Corbishley
September 2020



LINDA WOODS RESERVE REPORT 2019

The Society acquired Tussock Hill farm in October 2018. The initial focus in 2019 was safety. The combination of rain and sun in November and December 2018 caused rampant grass growth which became a concern in terms of fire risk. Finding a grazier was a priority. We sought expressions of interest and were pleased to sign an agreement with a grazier in February 2019. We are using sheep as a management tool to manage woody weeds and to reduce the fuel load.

We also engaged a geotechnical engineer to undertake an initial rockfall assessment. This information was essential for determining what areas require mitigation and potential options for tracks.

We held a workshop for members in February 2019 to understand their aspirations for the reserve. Approximately 40 members and supporters attended. Issues discussed included recreational tracks, the need for loop tracks with adjacent reserves, mountain bikes, dogs, horses, biodiversity, planting programmes, pest and predator control, cultural links, fire risk, volunteer work parties and communication with the public and interest groups.

In June 2019, John Marsh, a retired landscape architect and Heathcote local, came on board to help develop a management plan for the reserve on a pro bono basis. John spent several days walking and mapping the 233ha Reserve. In developing the management plan, we have taken a holistic approach and are considering biodiversity, different recreational users, erosion, access, safety, cultural values and history, connections with adjacent reserves, the views of the local community, fire risk and the management of stock.

Over the latter months of 2019, a number of meetings were held with key groups including CCC rangers. An ecological values assessment was undertaken in December 2019 and January 2020. Although highly modified, remnant indigenous vegetation occurs in rocky refugia and sheltered shady aspects. The reserve retains good examples of indigenous shrublands and to a lesser extent silver tussock grasslands. Botanical values include threatened, at risk and locally notable species.

Work on the management plan has continued into 2020. Our sincere thanks to John Marsh for the many hours he has spent on this project.

*Marie Gray and Bill Woods
August 2020*

PREDATOR FREE PORT HILLS ANNUAL REPORT 2019

2019 was a busy and productive year for Predator Free Port Hills. The number of households trapping on the Port Hills increased from around 500 to nearly 1000. Our goal is 4000 households by 2024. Over 3000 predators were caught in backyards and reserves across the Port Hills in 2019 including rats, possums, mice, hedgehogs and mustelids.

A key focus for Predator Free Port Hills is providing advice and support to trappers to increase their knowledge and success. To this end, we ran four trapping workshops over the year for backyard trappers including a trapping and monitoring extravaganza with the Department of Conservation as part of Conservation Week. Over 100 people attended this event. We assisted with trap making days in Redcliffs, Heathcote and Halswell, and a predator free workshop in Lincoln. We were pleased to see the launch of Predator Free Selwyn, which includes the Tai Tapu end of the Port Hills.

We ran information stalls at numerous community events over the year, including the Westmorland Community Picnic, the Governors Bay Fete, Estuary Fest in Mt Pleasant, the Lyttelton Farmers Market, World Rivers Day and of course our regular stall at the Mt Pleasant Farmers Market.

We established a partnership with the youth unit at the prison to build tunnel traps for our backyard trappers and with the Lyttelton Library of Tools and Things so that locals can borrow traps to trial.

We continued work on a new GIS reporting system and website to replace use of Trap NZ. This new system is based on the system used by Predator Free Wellington and has been developed pro bono by GIS in Conservation Volunteers. We hope that this new system will encourage all trappers across the Port Hills to report results as we know that our current data is incomplete.

We continued to meet regularly with the Pest Free Banks Peninsula project management group to progress this aspirational programme to eradicate pests and predators from Banks Peninsula and the Port Hills by 2050. The Summit Road Society is a signatory to this partnership.

The Society was delighted to receive the Department of Conservation Mahaanui Conservation Week Award for our work on Predator Free Port Hills in September 2019.

In December 2019, we commenced our pilot monitoring project, with the assistance of Katie Pitt, ECAN summer student, looking at predator numbers using tracking tunnels in three initial suburbs, Halswell, Westmorland and Sumner.

Thank you to Environment Canterbury for a significant grant, to National Storage for supplying a storage container for traps and to the private individuals who have made donations to the project.

Jeremy Agar and Marie Gray
August 2020