

Community committed to its chicks

By EMMA DANGERFIELD

The Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust is celebrating moving 102 hutton's shearwater chicks from the Kowhai colony to the Kaikoura peninsula colony last week.

Trustee Nicky McArthur said the culmination of the week's hard work by those involved was extremely exciting for the trust and would greatly increase the long-term viability of the peninsula site.

"This is outstanding in both scientific terms and for Kaikoura as a community," she said.

"Kaikoura is their last place on earth – and we want to share this achievement toward the survival of the hutton's with the community whenever we can."

Feeding the chicks will be taking place over the next month or so and the trust is keen to hear from anyone keen to be involved in the project.

Trust member Jodie Denton said so far a number of fantastic volunteers had offered their time, from local residents and Creation Care Study Programme students to passing tourists and ornithological groups from outside the district.

If you have some time and would be keen to volunteer a few hours to help with the feeding programme, contact Jodie on 319 7344.

Ms McArthur, who spent some



New home: This cute, fluffy chick is one of 102 hutton's shearwaters which have been relocated to the peninsula colony during the past week.
Photo: SUPPLIED

time at the colony over the weekend feeding the chicks, said it had been a true privilege to have been able to make a contribution to this year's efforts.

"To find myself out on the peninsula, with those stunning views, working alongside a team of 100

per cent committed individuals helping to try and ensure the long-term survival of an endangered bird was both humbling and inspiring," she said. "This, for me, has been an opportunity of a lifetime. They do not come along in this form that often

and I loved every minute of my day. This really is conservation at its best."

Some of the translocated chicks are ready to fly the nest already, having gained enough wing length, growth and weight to be ready to face the world.

Rex Williams, who has been co-ordinating this year's project, said 31 burrows were opened up on Monday and he anticipated that by today many may have flown out to sea.

Mr Williams, who used to work for the Conservation Department, was involved in the first main transfer of hutton's shearwaters in Kaikoura in 2006 and said the

technique was well-tried and straightforward.

He will remain in Kaikoura until the start of April, he said, by which time there should only be about half a dozen chicks left to feed, and the trustees would be left in charge.

The trust is extending the opportunity to visit the peninsula site to local school groups, and has approached all schools, as well as the high school's eco council, to get Kaikoura's students involved from an educational perspective. The hutton's shearwaters have even made it to the schools' curriculum, as part of year six and nine studies.



Helping hand: Rex Williams is co-ordinating the feeding of the shearwater chicks now they have been moved to the peninsula colony.
Photo: SUPPLIED

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