

Seabird weekend a soaring success

By EMMA DANGERFIELD

Kaikoura's first full weekend dedicated to seabirds and the science behind them has been hailed as a great success.

To coincide with the annual farewell of the hutton's shearwaters, which left Kaikoura's shores for their migration to Australia for the winter, the town was inundated with experts and enthusiasts, all sharing the same passion.

From walking to talking, there was something for all ages and interests, starting with a walk around the peninsula on Saturday morning to share knowledge of Kaikoura's unique seabird life.

Phil Bradfield from the Department of Conservation led the walk, which was enjoyed by about 12 people from both Kaikoura and out of town.

In fact the weekend showed just how many people from across New Zealand look to Kaikoura as a leader in seabird management, with visitors coming from as far away as Auckland and Dunedin, both of which are themselves centres for excellence in seabird life.

Seabird researcher Chris Gaskin said local tour Albatross Encounter was arguably the best seabird activity in the world, and others also acknowledged Kaikoura's status, including many of the weekend's other speakers.

Joining Gaskin were renowned experts in their fields including seabird conservation advocate Karen Baird, DOC seabird expert Graeme Taylor, senior curator of natural history at Canterbury Museum, Paul Scofield, and president of Forest & Bird, Andrew Cutler.

Wildlife photographer Peter Langlands was also at the event, holding a workshop for interested nature photographers.

Event co-ordinator Nicky McArthur, of Kaikoura Wilderness Walks, home to one of the three remaining huttons shearwater colonies, said the

Moving ceremony: Brett Cowan leads the dawn ceremony to farewell the hutton's shearwater at the peninsula colony.

Photos: EMMA DANGERFIELD



Great turnout: Local shearwater fans were joined by a large number of visitors who were in town for the seabird talks.

weekend had been inspirational and a true credit to all who had worked over the years to put Kaikoura on the map in terms of seabird conservation.

"This was about bringing outside people to Kaikoura and it brought internationally renowned people to town," she said.

"The [Hutton's Shearwater Charitable] trust will turn 10 in four years time and one of the star attractions of the weekend is the great debate – is Kaikoura the seabird capital of New Zealand?"

She hoped to see an event in

four years to coincide with the milestone and had thrown down the gauntlet to Auckland and Dunedin.

Bugman and general nature enthusiast Ruud Kleinpaste had agreed to facilitate, she said.

"The birding community around the world is the biggest single tourism group and there is therefore the potential to have a huge reach ... Kaikoura really put itself on the map this weekend. There is no other town in New Zealand that can claim a bird as their own and we



Farewell: The crowd releases hutton's shearwater feathers at the end of the ceremony.



Musical interlude: The Kai-Chorus choir sang a song specially written for the hutton's farewell ceremony.

are really starting to get locals to value what we've got here."

Kaikoura mayor Winston Gray attended many of the talks, which attracted between 70 and 90 people each, and said he was really quite impressed.

"I actually wish I had gone to

more. It was very well put together, with the science done in a way a layman could understand. I learned a lot of interesting facts," he said.

"It was a great weekend, a great event and great for Kaikoura – we need to be telling the world."

FUNDRAISER

Calling all co-ordinators – the Kaikoura Hospital fundraising gala needs you! If you are a dab hand in the cake department, or an expert in pricing second-hand books, or even if you just want to lend a hand for a very worthy cause, organisers of the monster gala would love to hear from you. So far, ideas include an auction similar to the one organised in 2011 for the centennial A & P Sho. The day is planned for Sunday, June 1 – Queen's Birthday Weekend Co-ordinator Ellen Smith is holding a meeting for interested parties this evening at 15 Fyffe Ave, 7.30pm. If this is too late notice but you would like to offer support in some way, another meeting will be held the following Wednesday.

Alternatively you can call Ellen 319 6997, or Liz Beazley 319 6077.

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