



why. The unusual shearwater used to breed throughout the Seaward Kaikoura Range. A variety of giant weta and the black-eyed gecko also live on the range.

Today Barry is involved in another campaign, to create a marine reserve around the Kaikoura Peninsula (see box).

In response to the tourist influx, locals have begun to offer services beyond just whale watching. While many whale watchers come from Christchurch, Blenheim or Nelson for the day, others stay overnight and are looking for different activities.

Kaikoura public relations officer Sue McInnes says it is an exaggeration to say that the 3000-population town is booming as a result of the whale watching.

"However, the whales have definitely put Kaikoura on the map with all the publicity. The frequent media attention has heightened the nation's awareness of the area generally. Several new businesses have developed, including tour operations which are unique – swimming with dolphins, snorkelling with seals, and alpine barbecue expeditions, which have all succeeded well in their first year of operation," she says.

The whale watching venture has proved invaluable because the best time to see sperm whales is during the winter, when tourism is normally at a low ebb.

*Above: The local iwi Ngati Kuri has taken on a new lease of life thanks to the advent of whale watching. Guide Lorraine Hawke and pilot Marcus Solomon are two of about 20 people now employed in the new business. Photo: Craig Potton*

*The world's smallest marine dolphin is native to New Zealand coastal waters. Hector's dolphins are commonly sighted around Kaikoura, although their total numbers are not high – about 3000-4000. Photo: Craig Potton*

