



# Kaikōura's untapped potential in marine education

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A whale off the Kaikōura coast.  
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Kaikōura has a “fantastic opportunity” to tap into marine education but needs funding to realise its potential, the boss of Kaikōura District Council says.

As the town celebrates Sea Week, which runs until March 9, advocates are reminding people of the district’s potential for marine research.

In July 2022, the council completed a business case for the future development of South Bay Harbour, thanks to funding from the Government’s Provincial Growth Fund.

It identified Kaikōura as having the potential to become an international hub for marine research and education - if it could get the funding.

“I still think there is a fantastic opportunity for marine research in Kaikōura,” council chief executive Will Doughty says.

“The proposals for the harbour really haven’t been progressed beyond the work we did 2.5 years ago.

“It all comes down to funding.”



Volunteers look out for whales during the Great Kaikōura Whale Count last year.  
KORI

In the meantime, the Kaikōura Ocean Research Institute (KORI) is doing what it can to raise awareness of the marine environment, with help from the council and the wider community.

A grant from the council's discretionary fund in 2022 allowed KORl research director Dr Jody Weir to complete a feasibility study to develop a case for marine education.

Last year KORl received a grant from the council's Creative Communities fund to employ interns to run a series of events.

These included the Great Kaikōura Whale Count, held in June and July last year, and a Share Their Shores event in November.

"There is a strong desire to have these inclusive events which connect with the ocean," Weir said.

"All of these inclusive events flow on from that work which was funded by the council."



**Rare Fin Whales spotted in Kaikōura**

VIDEO CREDIT: GUY COOMBES SHOT ON SAMSUNG GALAXY S25 ULTRA

The Great Kaikōura Whale Count, which was first held in 2020, is returning in June this year, thanks to sponsorship from South Pacific Helicopters and MainPower, North Canterbury's electricity network.

Events will be held throughout the month of June to raise awareness of whales and KORl will be calling for volunteers and will have opportunities for more internships.

The whale count looks at how many humpback whales are migrating between feeding grounds in the Southern Ocean near Antarctica and breeding grounds in a more tropical climate.

It also doubles as a tourism boost for the coastal town, and last year attracted 156 volunteers from 15 countries, at an otherwise quiet time of year.

The volunteers helped to sight 51 hump back whales during a two-week observation period last year.

Sperm, blue and southern right whales were also observed.

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