

Boat tours could settle gannet breeding colonies debate

CAPE ST. GEORGE

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The question of whether or not northern gannets breed on the Port au Port Peninsula may soon be answered.

Cape St. George Mayor Peter Fenwick said the question has been the subject of intense debate between the people of Cape St. George — who believe they do breed there — and the Canadian Wildlife Service, which maintains there is no evidence a breeding colony exists in that part of the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

On May 23 that debate may end as Crystal Waters, the tour company from the Bay of Islands, will be offering tours to the general public to the massive kittiwake nesting colony off square cliff and to Red Island, the old headquarters for the French fishing fleet in the 19th century.

On May 24 Memorial University of Newfoundland's birding expert Bill Montivecchi will personally conduct tours on Crystal Waters vessel in an attempt to settle the controversy and to provide an opportunity for visitors to see the spectacular cliffs on the peninsula's outer shore and the massive kittiwake colony.

Fenwick said while on the tour visitors will also be able to get up close and personal with the many whales that feed off Cape St. George.

He said the boat tours are part of a west coast festival that is kick starting the tourist season in May this year. On the southwest coast there are a multitude of events planned, all centering around the birds of the wetlands in Codroy and Stephenville Crossing, as well as on the sea bird colonies on the Port au Port Peninsula.

The boat tours are out of Cape St. George harbour and represent the first time visitors will be able to see the cliffs and the wildlife which abound in the area, according to Fenwick.

People interested in booking on the tour boat are asked to call the Inn at The Cape in Cape St. George at 1-888-484-4740.
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