

Migratory birds take flight

■ Nicola Kalmar

Hundreds of shorebirds thrilled spectators when they departed Roebuck Bay earlier this month to begin their epic journey to the Northern Hemisphere.

The spectacle happened during Broome Bird Observatory's public Migration Watch on April 11 and 12.

About 100 visitors attended the event to learn more about the shorebirds and watch them soar majestically into the sky in great flocks.

BBO assistant warden Ric Else said more than 600 birds were seen migrating on the Saturday, followed by another 100 on the Sunday, most of which were bar-tailed godwits that nested in Northern Siberia.

He said some of the flocks came right overhead, giving onlookers a great view of the spectacular and aerodynamic V-shaped formation that helped the birds save energy on their long-haul flight.

Once in the air, Mr Else said some of the birds would not touch down again until they reached their first stopover site in Northern China — a non-stop flight of 5000km taking about four days.

He said witnessing the birds' departure from Roebuck Bay was a unique event.

"There are very few places in the world where it is possible to watch large numbers of shorebirds gathering and setting off on their migrations ... the BBO will continue to monitor the migration until early May, and visitors are welcome to join them from 4-6pm any evening."



Broome Bird Observatory visitors monitor the shorebirds as they prepare for migration. Pictures: Ric Else



Shorebirds take to the skies to start their migration.



The shorebirds thrill onlookers with an aerodynamic V-shaped formation.

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