



# Christchurch director fighting for Antarctic toothfish

Tom Doudney

**THEY'RE** not cuddly like a giant panda, or as awe-inspiring as a Bengal tiger, but Christchurch film director Peter Young hopes to convince his audiences that protecting the Antarctic toothfish from commercial fishing is something we should all care about.

His documentary *The Last Ocean*, which argues for the need to phase out commercial fishing of toothfish in Antarctica's Ross Sea, will hit Christchurch cinemas for the first time tonight as part of the International Film Festival.

The Ross Sea is considered to be the last pristine marine ecosystem on earth and the toothfish is a keystone species.

Mr Young said making the film had been a six-year "labour of love".

A freelance documentary camera man, he first became aware of the issue when he was invited to work on a project filming in the Ross Sea. On his return he did some more research and came to the conclusion that was happening there wasn't right.

"You shouldn't be going all the way to the bottom of the world to catch fish out of the most pristine marine ecosystem to sell to upmarket restaurants in New York."

Mr Young believes New Zealand has a special responsibility for pulling out of the fishery after being the first to exploit it in 1996.

"Right at the moment New Zealand and the US are getting together talking about how they're going to protect the Ross Sea but there's a little hitch because the New Zealand Government doesn't want to phase out fishing.

"New Zealand led the charge in there and we need to lead the charge out."

While working on the film, he and two Christchurch friends launched the Last



**Raising awareness:** Peter Young says fishing in the Ross Sea should be phased out.

Photo: Tom Doudney

Ocean Trust, which had raised awareness internationally and brought together a coalition of large international organisations, such as the World Wildlife Fund and Greenpeace, focused on protecting the Ross Sea.

Bringing the film to Christchurch was special not only because it was his hometown, but also because Christchurch was New Zealand's gateway to the Antarctic.

"I would really urge Cantabrians to get out there, see the film and see what is happening in their own backyard. It's very surprising."