

Volunteers help jarrah drought research

CALM Volunteers Chris Norwood, Jane Oliver, Helen Williams and Elizabeth Thorburn braved heat, dust and march flies over several days to help CALM understand how jarrah forests tolerate drought.

The work will help model forest responses to different strategies and, in the longer term, help to predict possible changes from the Greenhouse Effect.

On the first day Dwell-ingup research technicians Rick Giles and Kim Whitford showed the group how to use porometers and pressure chambers to measure water stress in trees.

After that, it was down to the hard work. The days began well before dawn with the group heading off into the northern jarrah forest in teams, each under the watchful eye of a senior technician.

At the various sites, shotguns were used to bring down jarrah leaves for water stress measurements at dawn and midday.

By late afternoon the once enthusiastic volun-

by Stuart Crombie

teers had learnt that research is usually done at inconvenient hours, in uncomfortable places and doesn't stop just because you've left your water bottle behind!

The final job for the teams was to measure the tree leaf area by stripping all the leaves from each sample tree - a task which made everyone appreciate just how many leaves there are on even a small sapling.

The total leaf area was then calculated by weighing the stripped leaves and comparing this with the area of a small weighed subsample.

Both Kim and Rick were impressed by the good humour and attitude of the volunteers.

They said that an important research project was finished safely and in a much shorter period than would otherwise have been possible, and that it gave the volunteers experience of applied research.



Technical officer Rick Giles helps volunteer Helen Williams measure transpiration of jarrah leaves with a porometer.

Photo by Barb Giles