

Scuba skills scrubbed up at Rottnest diving site

IF CALM wildlife officers are called out to a marine emergency they will certainly be well prepared.

A number of them went to Rottnest Island last month to brush up on their SCUBA diving skills, iron out problems with equipment and so on, so they would be ready if called upon in a hurry.

The session was run by supervising wildlife officer Doug Coughran, with the help of Peter Lambert and Don Noble.

Greg Pobar, a CALM officer on secondment to the Rottnest Island Authority, also attended to

provide local knowledge of the area. It was in accordance with CALM's Scientific Diving Code of Practice, with the emphasis on safe diving procedures.

Wildlife officers Brad Daw, Warwick Roe, Peter Pennings and Lyle Gilbert, and media liaison officer Carolyn Thomson attended the session, which was a resounding success.

All are already qualified SCUBA divers on CALM's diving register.

"It was a good opportunity for participants to keep up their skills and experience diving in different seasonal condi-

tions," Doug said.

"In winter, for instance, SCUBA divers need to be particularly wary about hypothermia and heat loss in water.

"We held the last one in autumn and plan to hold a skills dive in every season of the year. The next will be in spring and will be run by Peter Lambert."

Doug ran through procedures to be followed in a diving emergency, reviewed hand signals and everyone checked and assembled their equipment.

Then the enjoyable part of the day began with the practical diving session.

Participants practised clearing a flooded mask, swimming on SCUBA without a mask and carried out an ascent while buddy breathing.

Then they had the chance to explore the dive site (Dyer Island), its reefs and marine life.

The dive was also an excellent opportunity to check sites for inclusion in a book to be published by CALM on dive sites in WA.

On the way home the group was treated to a spectacle by three playful humpback whales on the seaward side of Rottnest, en route to breeding areas in the State's north.



Peter Lambert refines his SCUBA skills. Photo by Doug Coughran

