

Kevin to research Rotto corals

REPRODUCTION can be difficult when you're stuck in one place, under water and surrounded by predators, just ask any coral! But with the assistance of the Dr George Malajczuk Scholarship, Kevin Crane will study how the corals at Rottnest Island overcome these obstacles.

Kevin is currently on secondment to the

by Alan Byrne

Environmental Protection Branch as an Environmental Officer from Swan Region's Marine and Coastal District.

"At present, little is known about whether the corals at Rottnest Island are self-replenishing, or are simply a result of coral larvae drifting south in the

Leeuwin Current from coral reefs further north. This has great implications for their management"

"If they aren't self-replenishing, then greater protection will be needed, as their ability to recover from human or natural disturbance would be greatly reduced, and dependent on the availability of larvae drifting south," Kevin said.

The study will also enable Kevin to draw some interesting comparisons between the mass spawning of corals in the north-west of Western Australia (first documented by Marine Conservation Branch Manager Chris Simpson), and that of corals on the Great Barrier Reef.

"The mass spawning of hundreds of different species of coral over just a few nights each year is truly one of the world's great natural spectacles. But while we have known about this mass 'orgy' for nearly 20 years, the reasons for such occurrences remain a mystery," Kevin said

"By comparing these mass spawnings between a variety of geographic locations with differing environmental regimes, I hope to discover which factors are causing corals to spawn in such a fashion."

Kevin has a Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in marine biology and aquaculture from James

Cook University in Townsville.

The proposed study forms part of his Honours which he is completing at Murdoch University.

Kevin first joined CALM in 1995 on contract to Swan Region's Marine Operations Unit, and the former Marine Branch.

He subsequently helped write and research *Dive and Snorkel Sites in WA*, numerous bush books, and his article *Slugs of the Sea* appeared in the Spring 1996 issue of *LANDSCOPE*.

Interestingly, Kevin's love of the marine environment stems from a rather unusual incident.

"When I was about 10 I remember finding a common seahorse when I was snorkelling. I wanted to take it home but was afraid to pick it up, so I speared it with a gidgee. An hour or two later I couldn't help but feel guilty, and although I tried in vain to bring him back to life, my attempts were fruitless," he said.

"Needless to say, I never used the gidgee again—and I still have the seahorse by my desk to remind me where it all began."

Kevin Crane introduces a Penguin Island touch pool and resident sea urchin to Orana Primary School year 2 pupil Natalie Staunton. Photo by courtesy of Sound Telegraph.





Orana Primary School Yr 2

popul Natalie Staunton

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CALM officer - Kevin Crane ^{and sea} ^{working}

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