



Media Release

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Colourful sea life takes hold on new Coogee dive reef

It took just a few short months for life to take hold on the 34 underwater sculptures that make up Coogee Maritime Trail.

University of Western Australia Biological Science Master's candidate, Matt Hammond (25), has spent the past year studying the reef as part of his marine biology postgraduate studies.

He donned scuba gear to dive on the trail for the first time in May 2016 and after many journeys below, including boat deployments of remote underwater stereo video systems, Matt's observations will now form a baseline for future studies on the reef's colonisation.

The invertebrates Matt has observed on the reef structures are similar to those that have called the historic Omeo wreck – the dive trail's centrepiece – home since it was blown ashore in a storm in 1905.

They include colourful creatures popular with recreational divers such as snails, oysters, fan worms, coral, octopus, cuttlefish and colourful nudibranch molluscs.

These animals are the rapid colonisers of the underwater world but as the reef establishes the slower colonisers will take hold transforming the reefscape, encouraging a diversity of fish species to seek shelter in the shallow bay.

Fish observed at the reef in the past year have included Australian salmon, juvenile baldchin groper, fan-bellied leatherjacket, dusky and crested morwong, skipjack trevally and flathead.

Matt said studying the reef was a unique opportunity for him to master the many specific, essential experiences and techniques needed to complete his degree.

Once he qualifies as a marine biologist, Matt hopes to work in science and marine conservation.



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And he plans to revisit Coogee Maritime Trail in the future to witness its blossoming underwater community as it expands and diversifies.

The State Government implemented a no fishing zone around the dive trail in September and anglers could face fines of up to \$5000 for flouting the ruling, which has the support of Recfishwest and the WA Fishing Industry Council.

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