

Police officer dives underground

THROUGH his exploits as a mountaineer, cross country skier, caver and cave diver Detective Constable Dave Warren has learned that making the right decision and seeing it through, very often means the difference between life and death.

Currently in the Western Region Airport Intelligence Branch, Detective Constable Warren said that the disciplines learned in outdoor activities have direct application to his police career.

“Both activities require the skill to sum up a situation quickly and to come up with the appropriate course of action,” he said.

“The common thing is that in climbing, caving and policing you are in a position where you have to make a judgement call that has to be the correct judgement call or you can end up dead very quickly.

“It’s about safety, procedures and a set of guidelines and rules,” he said.

A caver since 1985, he has explored cave systems throughout Australia, including Kangaroo Island and the Nullabor Plain.

In January this year he led a team of seven cavers, and two documentary makers to be the first to explore cave systems in Vietnam. Detective Constable Warren had his first international caving experience only last year with a trip to Java.

Along with caving, he is involved in other outdoor activities such as mountaineering, rock climbing, skiing and is a qualified cave diver.

He said that WA has a small but active caving group which specialises in overseas caving. The trip to Vietnam was the first full scale caving expedition in that country and was run in conjunction with Vietnam’s Institute of Geology.

The team was able to supply the Institute of Geology with information on the hydrology and geology of the caves.

“This information is important to the Vietnamese for water and land resource management,” he said.

Taking six weeks, the team concentrated on two cave systems near Hoa Binh, a provincial town at the southern end of the giant Song Da dam west of Hanoi.

“Some of the people in the areas we went into had not seen a European in eight years. Almost two generations of tribal people had not had much exposure to Europeans and with all the caving gear we must have looked quite strange,” he said.

“I got into caving in 1985 at University and have kept it up since then. In WA there are two caving groups, the WA Speleological Group and the Speleological Research Group, but I mainly cave with friends who just happen to be members of one group or the other.”

The progression from caving to cave diving seemed natural to Detective Constable Warren and he now counts cave diving as a favourite activity.

“Like all outdoor sports, cave diving is dangerous only if the safety precautions are not adhered to,” he said.

Detective Constable Warren has been to Cape Range in northern WA to assess cave diving potential in that area and at the request of the WA Museum. He was asked to take note of any cave fauna encountered.

While there, he found evidence of the existence a centipede-like creature only known previously in the Bahamas. This was the first time it



Detective Constable Dave Warren

had been found in the southern hemisphere.

“Cave diving is incredibly exciting,” he said. “It is an environment that is antithetical to human existence and drifting about in the dark in a cave with only the lights you bring with you for illumination is a fantastic experience.”

He said that he would like to return to Java to finish some of the explorations started there and another trip to Vietnam is likely to happen.

“There’s a huge amount of work to be done there.”

On another front, he and a few friends are looking to do a cross-Himalayan ski mountaineering trip along a frozen river that locals use to get out of their secluded valley for about two months of the year. He said it promises to be a spectacular trip of about 140km and will take about five to six weeks in January and February of next year.

“I’ve been to the Himalayas twice; once in 1988 which was a ski mountaineering trip which was in Kashmir and again in 1992.”

On the last trip the group of four climbed a previously unclimbed 6000m peak called CB16.

“There’s another lesson to be learned from outdoor activities that can be applied to police work,” he said.

“In both endeavours you need to keep fit. If you are not fit you don’t make the grade. □