

Randy seal bull attacked surfers

• ADAM HARTMAN

IT was most likely a young "testosterone-crazed" seal bull that attacked two surfers at Cape Cross the past weekend, and not a female, veteran surfer and environmentalist Rod Braby told *The Namibian* yesterday.

"It is highly unlikely that a female seal would attack. The jaws are also not big enough to grab a man over his head, as this one did," he said.

"The chances are very good that it was a young testosterone-crazed bull that was frustrated over territory loss and conflict with larger bulls, and saw the surfers as a threat.

"It is not recommended to surf near seal colonies during the breeding season lasting

from October through January each year," he said.

Braby said during the mating season bulls become very aggressive, especially the younger ones that need to fight for territory.

He explained that divers at Lüderitz are sometimes attacked by seals, but not as ruthlessly as this weekend's incident.

"Bulls will inspect the diver, and when they see the bubbles coming from the diving equipment, they take this as an offensive gesture and would possibly attack," Braby explained.

He said the sustained and ferocious attack by the seal on two surfers at Cape Cross was something new and baffling.

After more research, Braby found that there had been

a suspected seal attack on a surfer in Canada about five years ago, also near a breeding colony during breeding season, but it was not as serious.

He also said there would be no effort to hunt down the offending seal.

"This is their breeding colony and humans have to be respectful and humble while surfing there, and we are just fortunate that no such incident has occurred here in 50 years," he said.

Neels Engelbrecht and Chris Nel were surfing at the Cape Cross seal reserve on Saturday when they were mauled by a seal. They received over 100 stitches for wounds to their heads, backs, arms and legs. They are still recuperating in a Swakopmund hospital.