

WII (FIRE)

Gamilaroi (Gunn-e-darr) Fire and Seasons Calendar

DECEMBER - JANUARY

YARAAYBAA (SUMMER - TIME OF SUN)

BALABALAA (BUTTERFLY), BAMBUL (NATIVE ORANGE / BUMBLE TREE), YUURRAA (EURAH), GIRRABIRRI (LONG-NECKED TURTLES), WARABA / WAYAMBA (SHORT-NECKED TURTLE), GUWIRRA / GUMBI GUMBI (BUTTER BUSH / MALLEE WILLOW)

The yuurraa (eurah) is flowering. Yuurraa is a very special plant that has traditional uses in ceremony, spirituality and medicine. Gumbi gumbi (butter bush / mallee willow) is starting to fruit, it has berries for most of the year. The wombat berry is producing fruit. The grey-crowned babbler, a threatened species, is nesting at this time.

'The weather is warming up and lots of caper white balabalaa (butterflies) are surrounding the bambul (native orange). The butterflies lay their larvae in the bambul fruit, this is how we can tell the fruit is coming on' - Wade Natty.

'It is raining and girrabirri (long-necked turtles) are moving around. The waraba / wayamba (short-necked turtle) is good bush tucker' - Wade Natty.

'Around December, turtles eggs will hatch near the river and the hatchlings will go down to the water' - Paris Norton.

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER

MURRUMAY (THUNDER, LIGHTNING)

MAAYAL (BLUE CROWFOOT), YIILAY (HOP BUSH)

Channel-billed cuckoos migrate here in October. Eastern cave bats live at Boonalla Cave. They hibernate during winter and have young in November. Many wildflowers bloom as the weather warms up, including chocolate, vanilla and bulbine lilies, mat rush, darling pea, mistletoe, aemulla, wild flax, mountain gum, quinine and native grasses. Wild flax can be used for weaving and to make a variety of implements, such as baskets, disposable cups, string and rope. Yiilay (hop bush) is a common plant in the region, it is used to clean teeth or numb toothache. Its roots are used as a medicine also. Maayal (blue crowfoot) is a pioneer plant that reliably flowers in early spring and has gone by summer. When William Ridley travelled the Namoi River in 1872, he noted that the Borah was held 'when a sufficient number of young men have arrived at an age to claim admission into the rank of adults, [and] if the season is good and there is an abundance of animal food, fruits and the herb crowfoot.'

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER

YARRAGAA (SPRING WIND / SPRING)

MAALINHA (SOUTHWEST WIND), MAYRRAA (WIND), GULAYAAALI (PELICAN), DHINAWAN (EMU), BARRGAY (EMU CHICKS), DHIRRIDHIRRI (WILLY WAGTAIL), BURRUGARRBUU (MAGPIE), GUGURRGAAGAA (KOOKABURRA)

'Never take more than you can eat. Just take enough for your family and the mob' - Julie Talbot.

'There are heaps of ducks escorting their newly hatched ducklings around the river and grassy areas. The flowers are blooming, grasses are getting high and releasing heaps of pollen' - Wade Natty.

Maalinha are the breezes that come with showers from the southwest at this time (Yaama Gamilaraay! 2022). Borah Crossing is a significant cultural place, and Lake Keepit provides habitat for many waterbirds like gulayaaali (pelican). After winter, the bargay (emu chicks) are growing and have lost their stripes. Dhinawan (emu) are eaten and are also important as the constellation, the emu in the sky. Gugurrgaagaa (kookaburras) are noisy and active, marking their territory and getting ready to breed. Male guda (koalas) start calling to mark their territories from mid-August through to February.

'Culturally, kookaburras would land in a tree along the river and show the mob the best fishing spot and laugh to sing out about the fishing spot. The mob would always leave the smallest fish from their catch on the bank for the kookaburra when they left as a thank you' - Wade Natty.

'The kangaroo, porcupine, goanna and emu are our main important food sources, and our sacred totems. We rub the goanna, porcupine and emu fat on our bodies, it has medicinal qualities' - Greg Griffiths.

'The emu in the sky disappears at this time of year. It leaves the big river in the sky - across the countryside, the waterholes are getting dry' - Greg Griffiths.

In The Red Chief, traditional hunting was described: 'The cooking fires were alight as the hunters came drifting in, throwing down their game at the fires. There were delighted exclamations as lucky ones came in carrying a big, fat kangaroo. Others had an emu slung across their shoulders, others brought wallaby, others massive jewfish and codfish. It had been a good hunt.' Idriess (1953).

'The stars change with the seasons too. We align the flora, fauna, seasons and stars. The old men watched these things for thousands of years. Ceremony has patterns too. Weather, stars and ecology are all connected, our culture reflects that through our holistic view. We are attached to the Country and the content of the Country' - Greg Griffiths.

'The dhirridhirri (willy wagtail) is special bird, it is always around. It can be a good or bad omen. Sometimes it means death when it scratches the ground, or a baby is coming, when it shows its fanned tail' - Wade Natty.

'The burrugarrbuu (magpie) brings stories. It can tell a pregnant woman if she is expecting a boy or girl' - Wade Natty.



'Gunnedah is the place of the white stones and Mooki means muddy banks. We have bibil (bimble and yellow box) trees here on our Country. There are many scar trees, which were used as canoes to cross the river, to mark burials or for guliman (coolamon)' - Michael Horne.

'The emu in the sky is a special story for our people. It links to our Lore and customs. We look at the sky to know when to do ceremony and it tells us when our food resources are ready to be collected' - Greg Griffiths.

'I joined the Rural Fire Service to learn what I can, then I can bring it to the younger generation. The RFS need to listen to our people too. An Elder told me that being on the land and looking after it, even when you are using modern technology, is still caring for country. I am a great believer in leading by example and working together to create our own destiny' - Mitchum Neave.

FEBRUARY - MARCH

YUURUU (RAIN)

BIGBILA (ECHIDNA), YURRANDAALI (GOANNA), BILIRRI (BLACK COCKATOO), DHARRINGARRA (THUNDERCLOUD), GUNDAA / YURU (CLOUD), WALAWALA (STORM), BALABALAA (BUTTERFLY), MIRRI (STAR), YARAAY (SUN), GARRUWI / BADHA (FALSE SANDALWOOD)

'We eat yurandaali (goanna) and bigbila (echidna) at the end of summer when they are fat' - Greg Griffiths.

'Dharringarra (thunderclouds) build up during the day and then the walawala (storm) comes in the afternoon. At this time of year, there are a lot of big black balabalaa (butterflies) with white markings around' - Wade Natty.

'The constellations are always changing. The mirri (stars) are turning, the yayaay (sun) is coming up at a different spot - at the moment it has gone further east' - Greg Griffiths.

'The birds are getting around at this time of year. We might not see them for a while, then they are here, chasing the food sources, eating the last of the summer foods, fuelling up for a lean winter. We often see bilirri (black cockatoos) travelling through Gamilaroi country' - Greg Griffiths.

'The false sandalwood flowers during the warm time, it is an important plant for smoking ceremonies. In The Red Chief, traditional Gamilaroi life was described: 'The women came heavy-laden into camp with dilly-bags bulging with yams and tubers and roots balanced on their heads, and sometimes with a baby clinging to back or hip. Their coolamons were loaded with seeds and berries and nuts, also with small game and with goose eggs and other luxuries that thrive in good country during a good season' Idriess (1953).

APRIL - MAY

BALAL (DRY)

WII (FIRE), WIIMALI (LIGHT A FIRE), BIBIL (BOX TREES), GUDA (KOALA)

'Pigweed leaves are great in stir-fries and salads, while the small seeds are delicious in cakes and muffins' - Kaliela Thornton.

Bibil (box trees) are special plants and provide habitat for the guda (koala). Cultural burning and looking after Country also protects important animals from destructive bushfires.

'The emu in the sky has its legs stretched out, it is searching for a mate. After breeding and the eggs are laid, is the right time to collect the eggs. If there are ten eggs in the nest, only take four. Always leave some behind' - Greg Griffiths.

JUNE - JULY

DHANDARRAA (WINTER - TIME OF FROST, ICE)

GARRIL-GIL (COLD MONTH- JUNE), GUDUU (MURRAY COD), DHAGAA (YELLOW BELLY PERCH), BAWURRA / GANUJUR (RED KANGAROO), BIRRAA / GARARRANGAN (GRUB), DHIL (WILGA)

'We do cultural burns to regenerate our Country' - Greg Griffiths.

Fish are important to the Gamilaroi people. Dhagaa (yellowbelly) is a food source and is good for the immune system.

'We eat the dhagaa if we are crook' - Wade Natty.

Guduu (Murray cod) breeding season is late spring to early summer. Traditionally it was common to wait until the first big frosts came to start catching the big guduu. The fishing of big guduu continued all winter. Guduu love garril gali (cold water) (Yaama Gamilaraay! 2022)

Bawurra / ganuurr (red kangaroo) have thick skins during cold times. They are a totem and the most important animal to the Aboriginal people around Gunnedah.

'When the legs move closer to the body of the emu in the sky, the father emu is sitting on the nest, and the eggs should not be taken at this time' - Greg Griffiths.

The dhil (wilga) is flowering and producing fruit. The white box is flowering. The small fruits of the winter apple taste salty-sweet when they are completely ripe.

'The dhil (wilga) is an important ceremony plant. It is used for smoking, it cleanses an area before you use it and cleanses bad spirits. You can make tea from its leaves for anxiety and depression. You can also chew the leaves for toothache, or make an antibacterial wash for scratches and abrasions' - Wade Natty.

'We eat the witchetty grubs from the wattle roots. We look for the sawdust where they have burrowed into the tree, to tell us where to find them' - Greg Griffiths.

'From Porcupine Hill, far away out over the Breeza Plains the look-outs could see while watching for possible enemies, the daily progress of their own hunting parties by the smokes they sent up. A favourite hunting ground of the tribe was the rich Breeza Plains, abounding in the red and grey kangaroos and in emus, wallabies, kangaroo-rats, pademelons, bandicoots, brolgas, and the fat plain turkeys, with waterfowl in abundance in the waterways' - Idriess, The Red Chief (1953)

'Back in traditional days, if the men went out hunting and the women were attacked, they would light a signal fire on Porcupine Hill to let the men know to come back. Or, at other times, if there was drama the old people went to the highest peak and lit a fire to bring the other clans in to help them' - Mitchum Neave.



WELCOME TO COUNTRY
Yaama ngindaa, gulibayay ngindaa, nhalay Gamilaray dharan, Guninaa, Guvbarray gayay nginyanga, Wirongalaha maragal nginyanga, winangalaha biragal nginyanga.
Hello everyone, welcome everyone. This is Gamilaray land, Mother Earth. We speak using Gamilaray words. We acknowledge our ancestors and respect our children.

GAMILARAAY LANGUAGE
The Aboriginal language words included in this calendar are from the Gamilaray language which is used in the Gunnedah region of northwestern NSW.
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