



WII (FIRE)

Kamilaroi (Walhallow) Fire and Seasons Calendar

'The kids are learning fast, they are good. They love learning their language and culture' - Neville Sampson.

DECEMBER - JANUARY

YARAAYBAA (SUMMER - TIME OF SUN)

GURRAARI (CYPRRESS PINE), YURRANDAALI (TREE GOANNA), DHULII (SAND GOANNA), GUDA (KOALA), BIGIBILA (ECHIDNA), GARARR (GRASSES)

'We get Summer rains here in Walhallow' - Jason Allan.

Just before heavy rain, the gurraari (cypress pine) releases a mist that floats through the air. The creeping saltbush flowers during hot weather, these plants provide food for adult butterflies and their larvae, like the saltbush blue butterfly.

Many garaar (grasses) produce seed during Summer, which Kamilaroi people harvested as a major part of their food supply. Women picked the ripening ears while they were still green. They stacked them inside a brush enclosure which was set alight. The burnt seeds were piled on possum skin rugs. The men's job was to thresh the grain by trampling it in a rectangular hole in the ground. It was then winnowed in bark dishes and stored in skin bags until needed. To prepare it for eating it was ground with water on millstones and made into flat cakes which were cooked in the ashes of the fire' (Giacon and Betts 1999).

During Yaraaybaa (Summer - time of sun), the guda (koala) breed. In the lead up to breeding, males can be heard bellowing and fighting. At this time, young koalas start to leave their mothers and explore the world. A month later, a koala joey will be born.

'The yurraandaali is the big tree goanna which is eaten by some of our mob. The dhulii is the sand goanna, the little one with the tail coming up, it is a totem for some of the Kamilaroi people' - Neville Sampson.

Goannas and other reptiles are fat at the end of Yaraaybaa (Summer), preparing for the cold time when they will hibernate.

'Bigibila (echidna) and rabbits were important foods at Walhallow. People still eat the porcupine sometimes' - Raymond Saunders.

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER MURRUMAY (THUNDER, LIGHTNING)

MALIYAN (WEDGE-TAILED EAGLE), BUJUBUMURR (PLATYPUS), GIINBAY / DHANGGAL (SMALL / LARGE MUSSEL), GUNI (NATIVE BEE), WARRUL (HONEY)

'When rain comes from the west, we just get the tail end. When it comes from the east you get a good storm' - Jason Allan.

'I know when Spring is coming because the wattles start flowering and I start sneezing' - Raylene Saunders.

'Pelicans come and go with the seasons, as the water levels change' - Jason Allan.

'Buubumurr (platypus) is found in the Mooki River here. It is special because it lives in the water and keeps the waterways clean' - Neville Sampson.

Buubumurr (platypus) breed in Yarragaa (Spring). 'When I was young, we would see giinbay / dhanggal (small / large mussel) down at the river. We used them as bait. I haven't seen them for a long time' - Michelle Saunders.

Mussels were an important part of the traditional diet of the Kamilaroi mob. Maliyan (wedge-tailed eagles) come and go throughout the year, they usually arrive before they start breeding during the cold time, Dhandarraa (Winter - time of frost, ice).

The guni (native bee) makes warrul (honey) when there are abundant flowers.

'Native honey is found out in the bush on the hills around here' - Raymond Saunders.

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER

YARRAGAA (SPRING WIND / SPRING)

GILAA (GALAH), MAAYAAL (WEEPING MYALL)

'Different winds tell you different things. If there is rain coming. If you spend time outside you get to know it' - Jason Allan.

There are lots of gilaa (galahs) at Walhallow. Galahs breed in loyal pairs, with the male galah chirping and screeching to try to impress the female. Emu chicks have hatched and the father is looking after his family.

'We see the pretty green parrots feeding in the red bottlebrush' - Michelle Saunders.

The maayaal (weeping myall) is flowering. The yellow box flowers coming into Yarragaa (Spring).

'The big old mother maayaal tree is an important tree. This tree is traditionally good for tools, clapsticks and boomerangs' - Raymond Saunders.

'It was good to be a part of the first cultural burn here in many years. The Elders who have passed didn't talk about it. It is good to see the land rejuvenated' - Michelle Saunders.



FEBRUARY - MARCH

YUURUU (RAIN)

BAGY (RIVER), MURAA (SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOO), YURAYAA (FROG), GARRARANA (DRAGONFLY), BALABALAA (BUTTERFLY), GUWIRRA / GUMBI GUMBI (NATIVE APRICOT / MALLEE WILLOW)

'When we get water in the gully country, the bagy (river) flows afterwads' - Jason Allan.

Sometimes, big flocks of muraay (sulphur-crested cockatoos) come to the Mooki River, and the maliyan (wedge-tailed eagles) swoop down and catch them. Following the warm and wet weather, there are a lot of balabalaa (butterflies) and garrarana (dragonflies). Yurayaa (frogs) are abundant and are calling loudly.

The baan (mistletoe) is flowering, it is also called snottygobblers and has a sweet, sticky, slimy fruit. The gumbi gumbi / guwirra (native apricot / mallee willow) produces fruit several times a year. The Darling lily flowers during the hot time. Its bulb can be harvested and pounded to make a paste with water, which can be used as a substitute for flour.

'Don't eat the flesh of the gumbi gumbi, it will make you sick. You can chew or crush the seed and put it on your tooth, if you have a toothache. The leaves make the strongest medicine an Aboriginal man will ever find' - Neville Sampson.

APRIL - MAY

BALAI (DRY)

BIBIL (BOX TREE), BAL / NHAADHUU (NARDOO), GULIMAN (COOLAMON), GUDUU (MURRAY COD), GIRRAY (CRAWBOBS), DHAGAAY (YELLOWBELLY), BULAWAA (PAIR OF EMUS)

'The bibil (white box) bark is the best to take the guliman (coolamon) from' - Jason Allan.

The mugga ironbark, white box, cooba and golden everlasting are flowering. The bal / nhaadhuu (nardoo) plant is growing prolifically in wet areas. This aquatic fern is a bush tucker that you can process and eat the spores.

'We put it [nardoo] on a big flat stone, crush it with a little flat stone, pour water with it, mix it up like dough, cook it in the ashes' - Arthur Dodd (in Ash et al 2017).

The weather is cooling down and the grasses have cured, many plants have finished reproducing and animals are becoming less active, so it is a good time to start cultural burning.

'We look after Country and Country looks after us. We use fire to look after the grassy plains, the rangelands and woodlands. Our people burned the Country to keep our estate healthy' - Ted Fields Jr.

Emus are forming bulawaa (pairs) for breeding. Gudu (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 gudu. The fishing of gudu continued all Winter. Gudu love garril gali (cold water) (Yaama Gamalaray 2022).

'I was born and raised here. We ate girray (crawbobs), dhagaay (yellowbelly) and gudu down at the river' - Raylene Saunders.

JUNE - JULY DHANDARRAA (WINTER - TIME OF FROST, ICE)

YARRAAN (RIVER RED GUM TREE), YARRAANBIN (RIVER GUM FLOWERS), WANDHALA (EAGLEHAWK), BANDAARR (GREY KANGAROO), WAN-GUY (WALLABY), DHIL (WILGA), DHINAWAN (EMU), BURRUGARRBUU (MAGPIES)

The Caley's ironbark, dhil (wilga), yarraan (red gum), bibil (bimblebox), bluebells, billy-buttons and Darling pea are flowering.

'The dhil is an important plant for us' - Raymond Saunders.

'The burrugarrbuu (magpies) are starting to collect their nest materials for breeding' - Jason Allan.

Bandaarr (grey kangaroo) and wan.guy (wallaby) were eaten and used to make fur cloaks. Dhandarraa (Winter - time of frost, ice) was the best time to harvest these animals as their coats were thick during the cold time. Dhinawan (emus) are laying their eggs.

'When you are cooking bush tucker you must know how to cook it properly. Don't overcook the bundaarr or dhinawan. If you do, it will get too tough and you can't chew it' - Neville Sampson.

Cold time is a good time for cultural burning. In July 2022, we undertook the first cultural burn at Walhallow for many years. The burn was gentle, well controlled and burnt steadily back against the wind. We observed mammals, insects and birds escaping the fire - because it was slow, they didn't get burnt. Birds of prey like the wandhala (eaglehawk) and butcherbird came in to catch a meal.

'The cultural burn was a good experience and it looked clean and tidy after the burn. It is great to have young Aboriginal men involved and learning their culture this way. You could see the expressions on their faces - some were nervous, others were keen. After they had a go, you could see their chests puff out' - Raylene Saunders.

