Tiwi Seasons

TIWI ISLANDS — NORTHERN TERRITORY — AUSTRALIA

JANUARY
Jamutakari The wet season

During **Jamutakari** rain, **Pakitiringa**, falls every day and the swamps, creeks and rivers are full. **Wunijaka**, the north-west wind blows and brings rain. There is much lightning, **Pumurali**, and thunder with the rain.

FEBRUARY
Tawutawungari Season of the clap sticks

Kurlama ceremonies are held now. These ceremonies centre around kurlama (*Dioscorea bulbifera*), a yam that is prepared, baked and eaten only at this time. **Jankinaki** (Brahminy Kite) is imitated during the **Kurlama** ceremony, with dancers painting themselves white and ochre with feathers for decoration.

When **Mapulinka** (Emerald Dove) calls from the jungles the **Kurlama** yams are fat and ready to eat.

MARCH
Wurrijingari Season of the flowers

Towards the end of **Jamutakari**, the wet season, many trees and shrubs flower and fruit.

Japarrika (Greater and Lesser Frigatebirds) near the shore or roosting in the mangroves tell us that a storm or cyclone is coming.

Marrakatari
Season when tall grass flowers

The tall grasses **Marakati** (*Sorghum intrans* and *Sorghum plumosum*) produce dark brown seed heads at the end of **Jamutakari**.

Marakati (Spear grass) seed heads tell us **Kurumpuka** (crabs) have soft shells and are full of meat.

Wurringawunari
Season of the knock-em-downs

The first dry winds blow in from the south-east and flatten the tall grass, and dry up a lot of surface water.

Muma (Torres Strait Pigeons) leave the Tiwi Islands at the end of **Jamatakari** after feasting on the red fruit of **Jora** (*Carpentaria acuminata*)

APRIL
Kumunpunari The dry season of fire and smoke

Mwarapani (Crested Tern) eggs have been laid on the islands and are ready to be collected.

When **Wurrungilaka** (*Corymbia nesophila*) trees are flowering **Wunitiga** (Brushtail possums) are fattest as they eat the flowers and buds.

The flowers of **Jantikarl** (*Acacia auriculiformis* and *Acacia holosericea*) and **Wupunga** (*Pseudopogonatherum contortum*) signal that **Mwarapani** (Crested Tern) eggs have been laid on the islands and are ready to be collected.

MAY
Kimirrakinari Season of fire

Dry grass is burnt.

Timtirrahinga (*Eucalyptus miniata*) flowers tell us that the beehives are full of **Dalyngini** (honey).

JUNE
Pumutingari Season of the wind that flakes skin

The wind later in **Kumunpuri**, the dry season, causes your skin to become dry and flaky.

Yirriwinari & Munpuntari
Season of cold

Cold weather in the middle of **Kumunpuri**, the dry season, is signalled by the flowering of **Wurtigiga** (*Corymbia confertiflora*).

JULY
Yartupwari Season of the dry creek bed

Waterholes and creek beds dry up.

Kumwari
Season of fog

Temperatures are low and fogs develop in the mornings.

Punatinga (*Melaleuca* species) flowers tell us that **Kitimwantinga** (Sitting(ays) are fat and ready for hunting and eating.

AUGUST
Tiyari

Water holes dry up at this time of year making it easier to hunt **Jurriji** (Whistling Duck), **Wayimampi** (Magpie Geese) and **Tirrinthiri** (Burdekin Duck).

SEPTEMBER
Milikitorinari Season of hot feet

The ground is very hot and the soles of your feet become hot when you walk. Food gathering takes place in the mangroves and jungle patches, instead of the dry plains and woodlands.

When **Minta** (*Cyras armstrongi*) has orange seeds around the top it indicates that **Wakatapa** (cheeky Mangrove worm) in the fresh water areas is sweet and edible. The **Yurwurli** (sweet Mangrove worm) has eggs and is not eaten at this time of the year.

OCTOBER
Pumwanyingari Season of thunder

Thunder storms build at this time but there is little rain. It is hot and humid. There are often cloudy skies, **Rakungumpara** and even black clouds, **Turniyuwa**.

NOVEMBER
Kurukurari Season of the mangrove worm

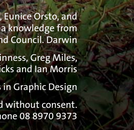
Worms are easy to find and are sweet and filling.

DECEMBER
Mumpikari Season of muddy possum tracks

When the first rains fall the possums return to their trees from foraging on the ground at night and leave tell-tale muddy footprints on the trunk of the tree. This makes possum hunting easier.

When **Alarpiningwani** (Common Koel) calls the wet season will begin soon.

The season of hot weather and high humidity



Tiwi ecological knowledge: Bernard Tipoloura, John Wilson, Lynette Johnson, Jacinta Tipungwuti, Eunice Orsto, and Judy Puruntatameri. Puruntatameri, J. *et al* (2003) Tiwi Plants and Animals: Aboriginal flora and fauna knowledge from Bathurst and Melville Islands, northern Australia. Parks and Wildlife Commission of the NT and Tiwi Land Council. Darwin

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