

# The Six Bonar (Seasons) - Noongar Life In Harmony With Nature

## Makuru

**The first rains. Fertility season.  
Time to travel to inland  
hunting areas.**

Cold and wet weather with westerly gales. Swans begin moulting, being unable to fly, become easy prey. Yongar (kangaroo), emu, quenda were hunted. Kangaroos were highly valued for their nutritious meat; skins were made into cloaks and bags; sinews used for binding; bones for nose bones and teeth to make scrapers. Possums were driven from tree hollows with smoke.

Annual collective hunting by herding animals using Karla (fire) provided bountiful meat supply.

## Djilba

**The second rains.  
Season of conception.  
Rains fill lakes and water holes.**

Becoming warmer. Inland hunting for kangaroo, emu, quenda, possum continues. Black Wattle provides a source of bardi or witchetty grubs. The soft green seeds of many acacia were roasted and eaten in the pods; ripe seed could be eaten raw or ground into a flour. Ngolark (White-tailed Black Cockatoo), identified by harsh wailing cries, were often seen tearing open thick woody seed pods of Marri nuts. Controlled burning from Birak through Bunuru to reduce undergrowth brings on lush growth of grasses and young plants in Djilba which attracted animals later in the cycle.

## Kambarang

**The wildflower season. Season of birth.  
Carpets of flowers.**

Receding rain. Small family parties linked to form larger bands. As the seasons advanced, people prowled the forests for waterfowl, birds' egg, parrots, cockatoos, hawks, pigeons and fledgling squabs. Hunting also focussed on swamps and wetlands; and freshwater tortoises were caught in the dwindling pools. Wonil (Peppermint Tree) leaves would be crushed with hands; its vapour when inhaled would clear the nose or if rubbed on the chest would relieve congestion. Jarrah flower would provide rich source of nectar for bees, birds and possums; the fruits were strung together as necklaces and hair ornaments; the wood was made into spear-throwers.

## Birak

**The first Summer.  
Season of the young.  
Reptiles emerge from hibernation.**

Hot and dry time with easterly winds during the day. Controlled local fires were lit in the scrublands that forces animals out into the open. Burnt lizards and snakes were collected in great numbers as the ground fire passed. Fur from Koomal (Common Brushtail Possum) was spun into long strands for belts and bands; the meat was cooked in hot ashes and eaten. Mungitch or honey-sweet beverage was drunk in large gatherings, from the nectar of Banksia flower-spike steeped in water. Flowering stems of Balga provided edible nectar and structural support for shelters; dry stems used for fire sticks; resin from trunk mixed with charcoal and kangaroo dung is useful as glue for tools. When the Mudja (Christmas Tree) was in blossom, it was time to move towards the coast.

## Bunuru

**The second summer.  
Season of adolescence.  
Children learn the art of tool-making.**

Hot easterly and north winds. Fishing and hunting coincide. Large sections of the country were abandoned for lack of water. Fish from the sea and estuaries constitute large portion of diet; large assemblies gathered. Kardars (Gould's Monitor Lizard) were readily caught, treated in a precise ritual and cooked in fire. Burning continued from Birak to reduce undergrowth and bring on lush growth of grasses and young plants. Bark and timber from Tuart trees were used to make containers, shields and temporary shelters. Bull Banksia flowers were sucked for nectar; dried fruit cones were used as fire sticks.

## Djeran

**The Autumn. Season of adulthood.  
Time of marriages and courtship ceremonies.**

Becoming cooler with winds from southwest. The loud flute-like carolling of the Kulbardi (Magpie) is distinctive. According to the Noongar story the magpie fought with the crow; the crow threw the magpie in a hot fire; the ash streaked the magpie's feathers white. Marri tree is the 'medicine tree': liquid red gum oozing from it is antiseptic (contains tannin) and was used to prevent bleeding, infections and flies; and dried gum used to treat diarrhoea. Numbit, Marri blossom soaked in water to make a honey-sweet beverage, was relished by the Noongar people.

Djiridji (Zamia) seeds would be processed for up to four weeks before eating either raw or roasted.

