

ADOPT A BUSHLAND

NAME

DATE

STUDENT ACTIVITY – YEARS FOUR TO SEVEN

THE NYUNGAR SIX SEASONS



Nyungar people observed plants and animals so they would know when it was time to move on. For example, when the Jarrah and Marri trees were flowering they knew it was the second summer. Indigenous Australians have six seasons.

Birak is the first summer season that occurs in December and January. Tribes would spend their time along the coast or by the lakes making the most of the warmer weather. Seafood was the main food source. Fresh water was found in soaks behind the sand dunes.

Food was plentiful during *Bunuru*, the second summer season from February to March. The Jarrah and Marri trees would be in full bloom attracting insects and birds. Yellagonga and his tribe would spend time around the lake or coast, fishing the shallows for mullet or gathering abalone and crayfish from the reef. By the lake they hunted for frogs and reptiles. The yanjet (reeds) would be gathered - the white part was eaten and tasted a little like coconut. Buried in the sand dunes of Mullaloo are 'middens'. Middens are areas where food leftovers like bone and shells were thrown in a pile.

When the Banksia trees flower the tribe would know that *Djerin* (April to May) would be starting. They would travel down to the Swan River, burning the grassland as they went. This would help to make sure there was good regrowth which kept the food supply strong. Along the river there were lots of Zamia seeds to eat. Mullet was fished from the Swan River. This oily fish was good for fattening up ready for the cold winter. It was the season for couples to court and marriage ceremonies took place.

The first rains and colder weather marked the beginning of *Makaru*. From June to July Yellagonga's tribe would move inland to the hills. It was more protected there from the winter winds. They would build shelters (mia mia) or use caves. Kangaroo, emu and possums were hunted for food and their skins. Skins were tanned with red gum resin and used as coats and blankets.

Djilba (August to September) was marked by new regrowth, the wattle trees and wildflowers started to bloom. Underground food was gathered – food like bush potatoes, bush onions, other tubers and roots. Animals like kangaroos, emus, quenda (bandicoot) and possum were hunted. The younger tribe members would climb trees to collect bird eggs but never empty the nest. Some eggs were always left behind so the next generation of birds could grow up and lay eggs of their own.

As the weather warmed, *Kambarang* (October to November) began. The tribes would begin moving back towards the lakes and coast. Balga trees would begin to flower with hundreds of small flowers on a long spike. This was the season for ducks, swans and swamp hens. Bird and turtle eggs were eaten as well as fresh-water crayfish, turtles and frogs. Reptiles awaken from their winter sleep and animals such as goannas could be roasted on the coals.



Booka (kangaroo skin cloak) Photo: WA Museum



Mia mia (shelter) Photo: South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council



The Nyungar Six Seasons Retrieval Chart

Season	Months	Location of Tribe (Where did they live?)	Food Sources	Other
<i>Birak</i>				
<i>Bunuru</i>				
<i>Djerin</i>				
<i>Makaru</i>				
<i>Djilba</i>				
<i>Kambarang</i>				