

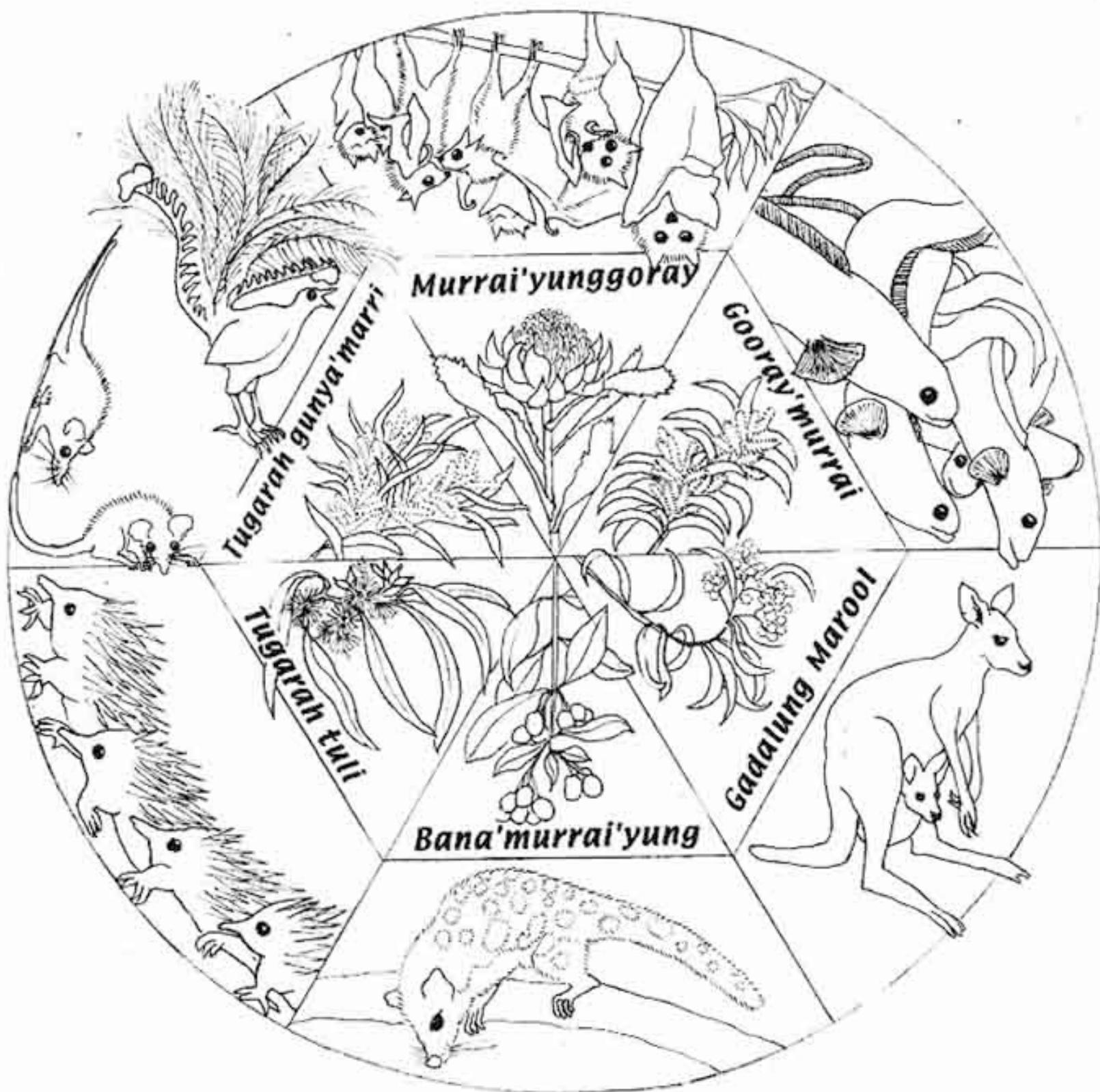
D'harawal

PERPETUAL CALENDAR

Frances Bodkin

Gawaian Bodkin Andrews

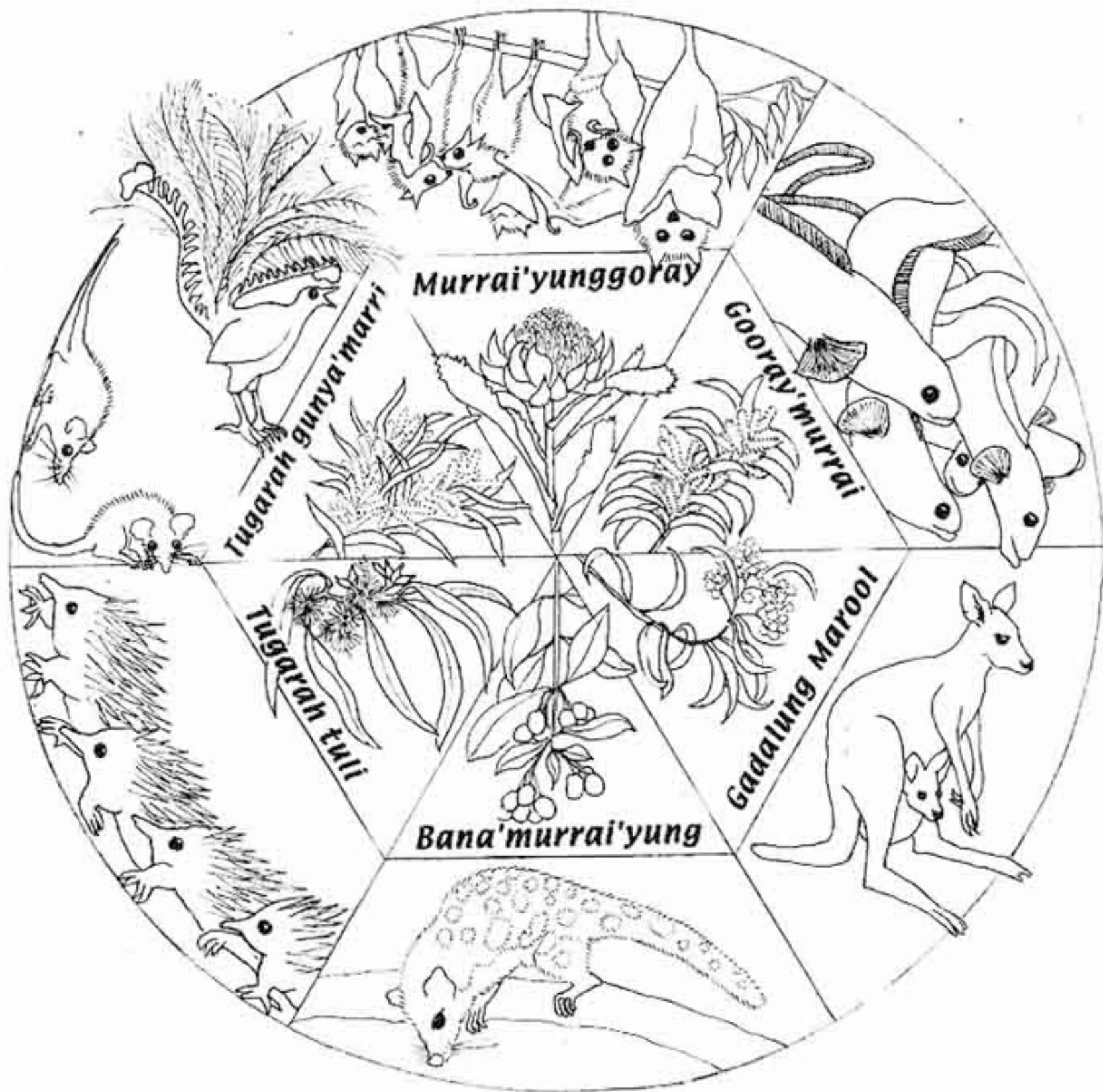
illustrated by Lorraine Robertson



PERPETUAL CALENDAR

D'harawal Annual Cycle

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D'HARAWAL ANNUAL CYCLE

Gadalung Marool: JANUARY-FEBRUARY

Hot and dry; eat only fruit and seeds.

*“Time of the blooming of the Weet’jellan (*Acacia implexa*); Burran (Eastern Grey Kangaroo) start having their babies.”*

As the hot, dry weather peaks and Weet’jellan is in full bloom, Burran (eastern grey kangaroo) gives birth. With kangaroo meat as a dietary staple, the D’harawal people had a vested interest in monitoring kangaroo mobs. They may have noticed a female absent herself from the mob to clean her pouch and genital area. The newborn, tiny, blind and pink, already has a highly developed sense of smell. Guided by the scent of her milk, and with only buds for back feet, it claws with its front paws through the hairs on the mother’s belly to the nipple in the safety of her pouch. It is so fragile and delicate that the mother is powerless to give any assistance for fear of damaging it.

The birth is timed to anticipate Murrai’yunggoray, spring. As the mob flees bushfires and predators, fragile pouch young hitch a safe ride, suckling and growing slowly, insulated first from heat then the cold as the year progresses. As the days again lengthen and new, lush, green shoots appear in Murrai’yunggoray, the joey tentatively nips grass from the safety of the pouch as mum bends down to feed. Then it ventures out on its own for short spells, responding quickly to its mother’s call to return to safety (Aldenhoven and Carruthers, 1992).

During this hot, dry season of Gadalung Marool, the D’harawal people called a ban on all meat and ate only fruit and seeds. This was a practical health measure inspired by how quickly meat spoils in the heat. Spring flowers have now produced seed and fruit ready to be gathered and enjoyed first thing in the morning (‘Widaburra’), before the birds wake. Prolonged daylight gives the women time to prepare the seeds. Some need roasting and grinding or special leeching to remove toxins.

Bana’murai’yung: MARCH-MAY

“Wet, getting cooler; time to make cloaks and start the journey to the coast.

*Time of the ripening of lillipilli fruit (*Syzygium* ssp);*

Marrai’gang, the tiger quoll seeks her mate.”

Days shorten, Lillipilli fruits ripen and the rainforest rings with the yowls of Marrai’gang (spotted-tail quoll). She has developed a temporary pouch and a firm padding of fat around her neck, selected a nursery burrow site and is now calling

to the males. Quolls are secretive and elusive nocturnal animals, preferring to communicate with one another via communal latrine sites, usually located on an exposed rocky ledge. A breeding couple, however, will share the same burrow and feed the young together. The female carries the babies in her pouch, then on her back, and then leaves them in a safe burrow during colder months. As the bounties of young birds, new lizards, baby rodents and a variety of insect life emerge in Murrai’yunggoray, the young are ready to venture forth and learn to hunt at heel (Breidahl, 1994).

As the weather cools, Lillipilli berries provided a take-away feast for the D’harawal people as they travelled from the mountains around Mt. Annan to the coast. They spent winter in the more temperate areas around Appin and the Illawarra escarpment. It is time to check warm cloaks, to mend and make additions, ready for the coming cold.

Tugarah tuli: JUNE-JULY

“Cold; time to gather the nectar for ceremony

*Time of the flowering of the Burringoa (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*);*

Burrugin, the echidna, begin their gatherings.”

In the short days and cool air, Burringoa blossoms and the normally crepuscular and solitary Burrugin (short beaked echidna) appear in daytime. Moving through the bush, the D’harawals would have noticed the males congregating around a female to form a ‘train’ behind her and vie for the privilege of mating. She accepts only the first in line so, silently, with only the scrabbling of feet in the dirt and the clack of quills, the hopefuls set about pushing and jostling one another. The result is a line of echidnas graduating from largest down to smallest, like a family out for a Sunday stroll.

Echidnas have a relatively low body temperature and shun the summer heat. As young puggles develop, they are secreted away in insulated nursery burrows until they are ready to begin foraging for themselves in the cool of Bana’murai’yung (Rismiller, 1999).

In the Australian bush, a continuous supply of nectar, in the form of flowers, is important for many small creatures such as gliders, pygmy possums, flying foxes, lorikeets and honeyeaters. The D’harawals, too, collected nectar from winter flowers such as banksias, gums and early blooming Gymea lilies. Soaked in a wooden bowl filled with water and covered with a flat rock, they fermented until the ceremonies began. Eucalyptus leaves were used to combat winter sniffles and chest complaints.

Murrai'yunggoray: SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER

Tugarah gunya'marri: AUGUST

"Cold and windy: build shelters to face the rising sun; time to begin the journey to the highlands along the rivers; plenty of fish."

Time of the flowering of the Marrai'uo (Acacia floribunda);

Boo'gul, the marsupial mouse, mates and dies;

Wiritjiribin, the lyrebird, builds his mounds when season ends"

When the bush is green and gold with flowering wattles, especially Marrai'uo and Boo'kerrikin (*Acacia decurrens*), and the days are lengthening again, the little Boo'gul like the eels, get their one chance in a lifetime to mate. This is a frenzied, stressful climax to a short life as a fierce, carnivorous hunter who relies on his quickness and agility. After two glorious weeks, he is spent and dies as his immune system is compromised. In the balance of nature, he has made way for the female to hunt and forage without competition during the hardest time of late winter as she 'eats for two' (or, rather, 22). In Murrai'yunggoray, she gives birth to many more rice-grain-sized young than her 12 nipples can accommodate. In a competitive bid for survival, they cling onto her nipples as she moves around. She only leaves them in a nursery after about five weeks when each one is half her size. In the more humid weather with a plethora of small insects in Goray Murrai, they learn to hunt at heel (Jones, 2003).

Wiritjiribin, the superb lyrebird, also, anticipates the start of a new year in Murrai'yunggoray. Wiritjiribin has mated and produced a single chick. Now the male sets about building a display mound: a circular clearing on the forest floor about two metres across, often placed to catch a sunny 'spotlight' and in sight of the female busy attending to the demands of her young in the nest. He makes up to 12 mounds in preparation for the courting which peaks during Tugarah Tuli. On these mounds he practices his song and dance routine all year, teaching his repertoire to the next generation of male lyrebirds.

In the Dreamtime, Wiritjiribin taught the D'harawal people to dance. The lyrebird's repertoire includes a 'kronk kronk', described by L. H. Smith on his "Song of the Lyrebird" CD, which sounds for all the world like the tapping of clap sticks. The accompanying action is a rocking motion reminiscent of stamping. Because of this association, Wiritjiribin had nothing to fear from the D'harawals as he went about his business. Fresh clearings and mound renovations would have been monitored by the D'harawal people as they travelled through the rainforests of what is now the Royal National Park and Bulli Escarpment to their summer homes in the highlands beyond Campbelltown, ready to welcome the New Year with ceremonies and celebrations.

"Cool, getting warmer; time for major ceremony

*Time of the Miwa Gawaian (*Telopea speciosissima*);*

Gathering of the Ngoonuni (Grey-headed Flying Fox)."

As the weather warms and the Waratah buds swell, the D'harawal people began their major ceremonies in celebration of the new life promised by this season.

They would have noticed gradual increases in grey-headed flying fox numbers. Rising temperatures bring the promise of plentiful blooms, producing the nectar that is Ngoonuni's staple diet. Silently winging overhead at dusk, they fly in from southeastern Australia, where they foraged in small, segregated groups during the less bountiful cold weather. Converging on a stand of trees, possibly casuarinas by the river's edge, they establish a summer camp, a 'city' of flying foxes. They will give birth, then suckle, nurture and educate their offspring through the hottest time of the year. When the weather cools and blossoms dwindle, they will mate and leave in smaller groups once again. The embryos go on 'hold'; they begin developing to time the births for the first part of the next year's warm season.

Gooray'murrai: NOVEMBER-DECEMBER

"Warm and wet; do not camp near rivers

*Time of the blooming of the Kai'arrewan (*Acacia binervia*);*

Parra'dowee the Great Eel calls his children to him."

Golden yellow flowers of the Kai'arrewan colour the landscape. Thunderstorms and torrential rains arrive. It is time to be wary of camping too close to the river.

Parra (freshwater eels) begin to change. Their skin darkens, their eyes enlarge and their digestive systems shut down. En masse, the adults make their way down the swollen rivers and out to sea. Disregarding food, they head for the deep ocean around Fiji and Vanuatu, with only one thing on their minds - much like the post-HSC Pacific cruises of today. For the eels, this is no 'rites of passage of youth' but more like 'last rites': this is the one and only time in their lives when they will spawn. They die, their bodies fall to the ocean floor, and their oily eggs float slowly and hatch on their way to the ocean surface. Over the next year and a half, the young transform from leptocephali to glass eel. Parra'dowee, the Great Eel, calls the glass eels into the mouth of Sydney Harbour so they can make their way upstream in the swollen rivers, find the homes of their parents and live out their adult lives (Fort, 2002).



Burra: Eastern Grey Kangaroo

JANUARY Gadalue' marool	
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Weet'jellan: Hickory Wattle, *Acacia implexa*

FEBRUARY Gadalue Marool	
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Marrai'gang: Spotted Quoll

MARCH Bana'murrai'yung

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Lilli Pilli: Brush Cherry, *Syzygium australe*

APRIL Bana'murrai'yung	
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Burrugin: Echidna

MAY Tugarah Tuli

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Burringoa: Forest Red Gum, *Eucalyptus tereticornis*

JUNE Tugarah Tuli	
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Wiritjiribin: Superb Lyrebird

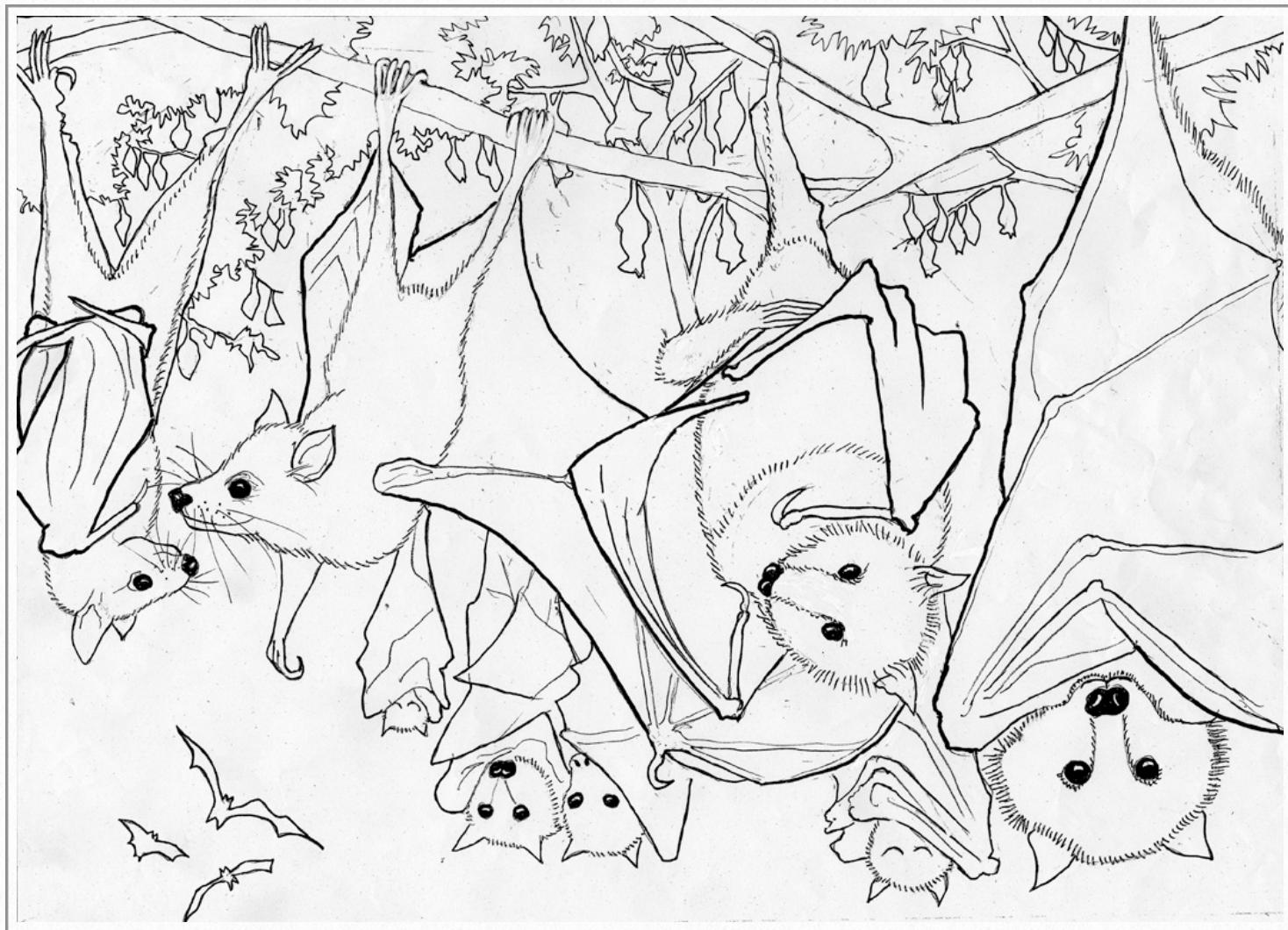
JULY Tugarah'gunya'marra

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Marrai'uo: Sally Wattle, *Acacia floribunda*

AUGUST Tugarah'gunya'marra	
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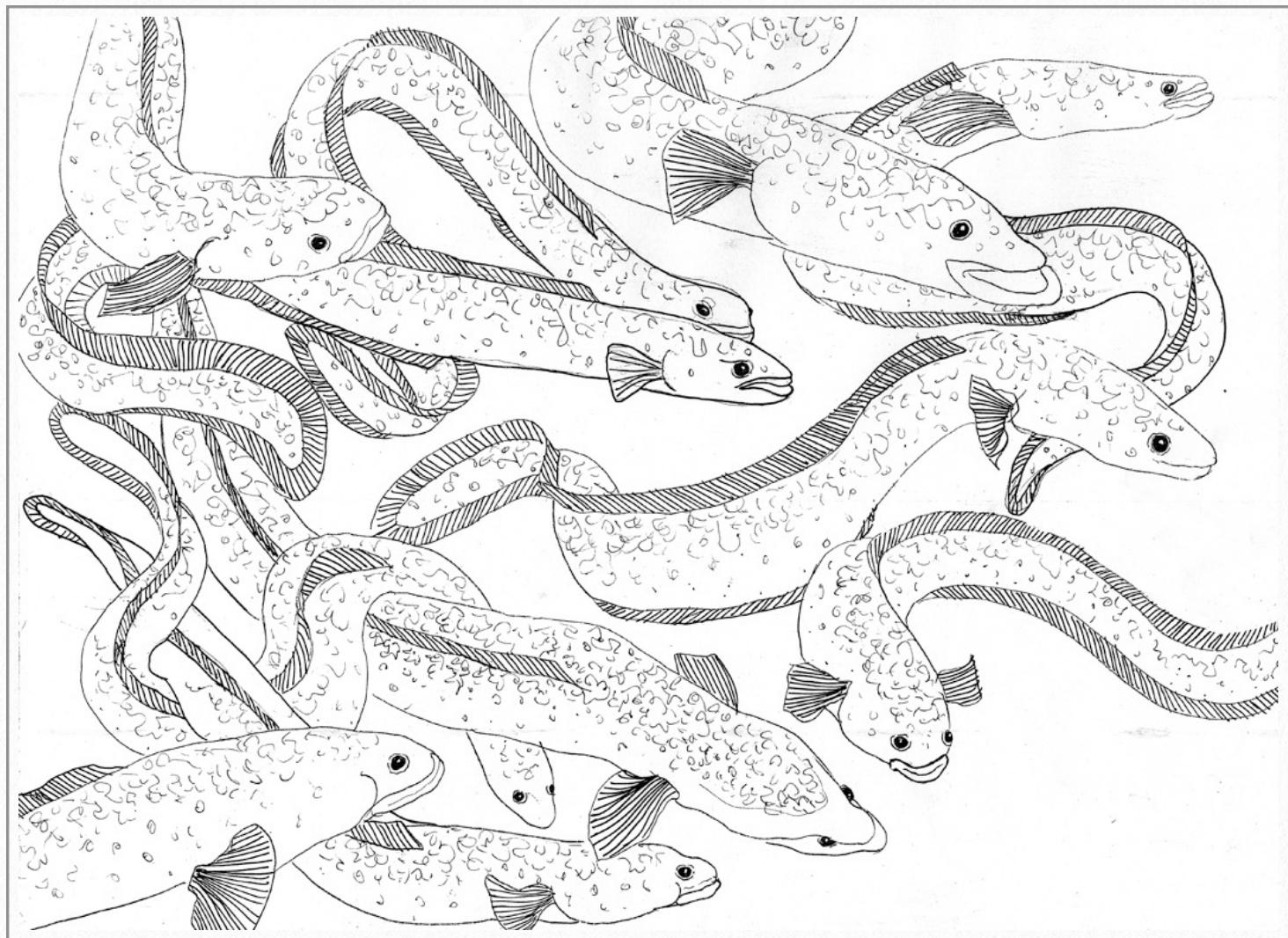
Ngoonuni: Grey Headed Flying Fox

SEPTEMBER Murrai'yunggoray	
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Miwa gawaiān: Waratah, *Telopea speciosissima*

OCTOBER Murrai'yunggoray	
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Parra: Short Finned Eel

NOVEMBER Goray Murrui	
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Kai'arrewan: Myall wattle, *Acacia binervia*

DECEMBER Goray Murrai	
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