

Te Iwa o Matariki



Each of the nine stars of Matariki holds a certain significance over our wellbeing and environment as seen from the Māori view of the world.

Write the name of the star in the space next to its significance in te ao Māori.

Matariki ✦
Pōhutukawa

Waitā ✦
Tupuārangi

Hiwa-i-te-Rangi ✦
Waitī

Tupuānuku
Waipuna-ā-Rangi
Ururangi



The star connected with everything that grows up in the trees: fruits, berries, and birds. During the rising of Matariki, kererū were harvested in large numbers, cooked and preserved in their own fat. This star connects the cluster to the harvesting of birds and other elevated food products like fruit and berries from the trees.



The star associated with the ocean and food sources within it. It is said that, when this star is strong and bright during the rise of Matariki, fishing will be good during the year ahead. Conversely, if it is weak and obscured, fishing may not be as plentiful.



The star connected with the winds. The appearance of this star in the morning of Pipiri would forecast the weather for the new year. Māori have always maintained a keen interest in the wind as we travelled here by harnessing its power. There are names for all the various types of winds in te reo Māori.



The star connected to fresh water and all the creatures that live within awa (rivers), waipuna (streams), pūkaki (streams), kūkūwai (wetlands) and roto (lakes). This is the fourth-brightest star in the Matariki star cluster and means to be sweet or melodious.



The star connected to those that have passed on. When an individual dies, their spirit leaves their body and undertakes a journey along Te Ara Wairua, the pathway of the spirits. This journey ends at the northernmost point of the North Island at a place called Te Rerenga Wairua, the departing place of the spirits. The dead travel along the rocky ledge towards the ocean where an ancient pōhutukawa tree stands. They then descend the aka (root) of this tree and disappear into the underworld. Through this star, Māori remember those who have died in the past year, providing an opportunity for all of us to sit in remembrance, mindfulness, and appreciation.



The star connected with everything that grows within the soil to be harvested or gathered for food. When Matariki sets in the western sky at dusk, this period indicates the final harvesting of the gardens as the earth begins to shut down and whānau take shelter for the winter. This is exemplified in the whakataukī: 'Hauhake tū, ka tō Matariki' or 'Lifting of the crops begins when Matariki sets.'



The star connected with granting our wishes and realising our aspirations for the coming year. Māori would send their dreams and desires for the year to this star in the hope that they would be realised, similar to the notion of wishing upon a star or making a new year's resolution. It was believed that if this star were bright in the sky during Matariki then hopes and aspirations for the year might come true.



The star connected with the rain. The appearance of this star in the morning of Pipiri would forecast the weather for the new year. Māori have names for a massive variety of rain and weather characteristics. For example, the pooling of water on the ground caused by heavy and persistent showers of the winter months are often referred to as 'Matariki tāpuapua.'



The star that signifies reflection, hope, or connection to the environment, our health and wellbeing, and the gathering of people.