



Matariki

Matariki and Puanga

Ngā Tohu o Te Tau Hou Māori



Te Wānanga
o Aotearoa





**Ka ara mai a Matariki, ka ara mai a
Puanga, ka mānawatia a Puanga, ka
mānawatia a Matariki.**

Matariki rises, Puanga rises, celebrate
Puanga, celebrate Matariki.

Matariki and Puanga

Across different regions, iwi may acknowledge different stars to signify the Māori New Year. For some regions Matariki marks the new year. For others, Puanga is that star.

While Puanga and Matariki are both associated with the Māori New Year, they are not the same. It's important to understand that accepting one cluster to mark the new year doesn't disregard the other, as both Matariki and Puanga are important. Some iwi acknowledge and read both Matariki and Puanga for signs of what lies ahead in the new year.

Finding Puanga and Matariki

A great time to look for Puanga and Matariki is early in the morning before the sun rises in late autumn. Turn to the southeast to get started.

Puanga is the fifth brightest star in the sky. Find the constellation of Tautoru, also known as Orion's Belt or the Pot. The single bright star above this group of three is Puanga.

Once you have found Tautoru, look to the left. You will see the red giant Taumatakuku (Aldebran), and to the left of that star you'll see Matariki. See if you can count all nine stars that belong to the Matariki cluster.





Ngā Whetū: The Stars

Matariki is a star cluster made up of nine stars, also known as Pleiades. Puanga is a single star, also known as Rigel. However, it is often grouped together with Puanga Hori (Procyon) and Whakaahu (Castor) under the name Puanganui-o-te-rangi.

Matariki and Puanga are both part of Te Waka o Rangi, the waka that carries the souls of those who passed away during the previous year. Matariki is at the front of the waka, and Puanga (along with Tautoru) is at the stern.

Both Matariki and Puanga set at the end of autumn for a period of about a month. Unlike Matariki, Puanga remains visible. When Matariki and Puanga rise in the early morning sky, it signifies the start of the Māori new year.

Ngā Tohu: The Signs

For our tūpuna, our Māori ancestors, meticulous astrological observations were recorded and handed down from generation to generation. This knowledge was connected to seasonal activities such as planting and harvesting, the flowering of plants, the spawning of fish, and the natural cycles of the environment.

Each star of Matariki holds a certain significance over our wellbeing and environment. The appearance of Matariki is carefully observed by tohunga (cultural and spiritual leaders), and the brightness of the different stars in the cluster, along with their movement and clarity, indicates the bounty of the impending season.

Iwi along the west coast have a long-recorded history of observing Puanga. Over several centuries, they have developed systems that connect Puanga to the prevailing westerly winds which have huge influence over regional weather patterns. Their observations of Puanga give a more reliable long-term forecast for those regions.

Photo Credit: Erica Sinclair



Ngā Ritenga: The Rituals

Matariki is celebrated in the lunar phase of Tangaroa, the last quarter phase of the moon, with a ceremony called Whāngai i te Hautapu, or hautapu more commonly. The hautapu ceremony has three phases. In the first phase, Te Tirohanga, tohunga carefully observe the appearance of Matariki. Next is Te Whakamahara i ngā mate, remembering those who have passed. Finally, food is offered to the stars in Te Whāngai i ngā whetū.

The Whāngai i te Hautapu ceremony includes ceremonial kai connected to different stars in the Matariki cluster: something from the earth for Tupuānuku, a bird or something from the skies for Tupuārangi, something from fresh water for Waitī, and something from the ocean for Waitā. When the food is finished cooking, it is uncovered to release the hautapu within the steam to rise and feed the stars.

There are two ritenga connected to Puanga, one at its setting called Te Maru o te Tau, and one when it rises, called Te Tahi o te Tau. In Te Maru o te Tau, the deceased are sent to the sky, challenges from the past year are released, and the winter wānanga begins. Te Tahi o te Tau is conducted before dawn when Puanga rises. This ceremony recognises that the departed have become stars, welcomes and gives thanks for the new year, and reaffirms commitments to our tūpuna, the environment, and the future.

Three types of kai feature heavily during Te Tau o Puanga, or the Puanga Period: kererū (wood pigeon), piharau (lamprey or blind eel), and wānanga (food for the mind). At the end of autumn, when Puanga sets, the miro tree fruits and produces berries that feed kererū throughout the winter. The piharau migrate inland from the ocean during winter, and Te Tau o Puanga stretches to the end of their run. Finally, the winter is an important time for wānanga as activities move inside until spring.

For a more in-depth understanding of Puanga and the practices associated with it, we recommend visiting the Puanganui o te Rangī website at puanganui.co.nz.

More Matariki resources can be found at matariki.twoa.ac.nz.



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