



Ngā Whetu o Matariki - The Nine Stars of Matariki

Matariki is the Māori name for the cluster of stars also known as the Pleiades.

It rises in mid-winter and for many Māori, it heralds the start of a new year. Matariki literally means the 'eyes of god' (mata ariki) or 'little eyes' (mata riki).

Twinkling in the winter sky just before dawn, Matariki (the Pleiades) signals the Māori New Year. Traditionally, it was a time for remembering the dead, and celebrating new life. So it was seen as a happy event –

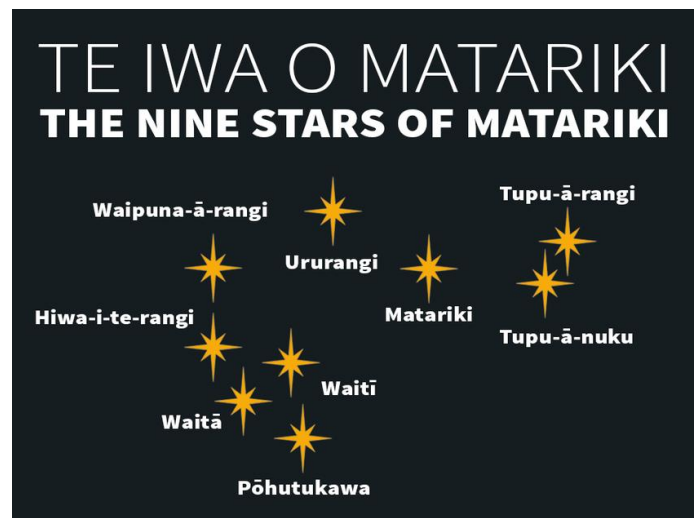
signalling crops had been harvested and seafood and birds had been collected. With plenty of food in the storehouses, Matariki was a time for singing, dancing and feasting.

Nine stars of Matariki

Contrary to popular belief, there are nine stars in the constellation of Matariki, rather than seven*. They all hold dominion over particular areas of our environment as seen from a Māori world view. They are; Matariki, Pōhutukawa, Waitī, Waitā, Waipuna-ā-rangi, Tupuānuku, Tupuārangi, Ururangi, and Hiwa-i-te-rangi. Traditionally, Māori ancestors did not just look at the constellation as a whole, but rather viewed each star individually, gaining an insight into the year ahead.

Matariki, or Māori New Year celebrations were once popular, but stopped in the 1940s. In 2000, they were revived. Only a few people took part at first, but in just a few years thousands were honouring the 'New Zealand Thanksgiving'. A special feature of Matariki celebrations is the flying of kites – according to ancient custom they flutter close to the stars.

Matariki can be celebrated at different times in different years, depending on when the stars rise. This is why the celebration can have differing dates. In 2020 Matariki is officially celebrated on the 13th of July with the rising and first visibility of the stars. But celebrations can also occur at different times of the month for a variety of reasons.



For 2020 Pūkaha is celebrating the nine stars of Matariki from 13th July - 31st July.

**The star cluster of Matariki (Pleiades) has long been associated with the Greek tale of the seven daughters of Pleione and Atlas, who, upon being harassed turned into doves and flew into the heavens. In this version of the story, two stars were not included in any traditions or commemorations, rather the mythical seven were embraced. However, history records that Māori were aware of the presence of more than seven visible stars within the cluster. Māori have re-confirmed that there are nine stars that constitute the star cluster of Pleiades or Matariki not just seven stars as commonly believed.*

The nine stars of Matariki...

Waitī - Waitī watches over our freshwater environments. Our awa (rivers), roto (lakes), kūkūwai (wetlands), and waipuna (springs) – to name just a few. As the waters flow, she sees how they support us, provide for us, connect us, and sustain us. Waitī has heard the important stories that our waters have to tell. She encourages us to listen, and to learn from them as well.

Waitā - Waitā surveys our vast oceans, Te Moana-nui-o-Kiwa (the Pacific Ocean) and Te Tai-o-Rehua (the Tasman Sea). The variety of life in these waters is so diverse that he finds he is still discovering different species of marine plants, whāngote (mammals), manu (birds) and ika (fish) – even after all of this time. Biodiversity is essential to our world. Our actions need to support it, and even better still, enhance it. Waitā encourages us to respect our coasts and oceans, and treat their inhabitants like the taonga (treasures) they really are.

Waipuna-ā-rangi - Waipuna-ā-rangi welcomes the winter sky waters in all their forms – ua (rain) ua nganga (hail) and hukarere (snow) included. She sees how these waters contribute to the healthy cycle of our earth, and also, the effects when they don't arrive as required. Waipuna-ā-rangi encourages us to reflect about climate change, and what we can do today to lessen the problem.

Tupu-ā-nuku - Tupu-ā-nuku has a special interest in our edible plants. This includes the natives pūhā (sowthistle), kawakawa (pepper tree), kōkihi (NZ spinach), and tī kōuka (cabbage tree). In watching the preparations for their growth and harvest, she has come to understand the importance of healthy soil. Tupu-ā-nuku encourages us to consider more carefully what we are putting into Papatūānuku (the earth), and in what quantities.

Tupu-ā-rangi - Tupu-ā-rangi has long looked out for the ngahere (forests), and he is deeply concerned by the collapse he is witnessing. Our native wildlife – manu (birds and bats), mokomoko (lizards), and ngārara (bugs) – are being ravaged by introduced pests and predators. As are our ancient rākau (trees) – like tōtara, pūriri, pōhutukawa and rātā. Tupu-ā-rangi encourages us to take action to help to bring our forests back to life again.

Ururangi is close friends with te whānau pūhi (the wind family) – including Hauraro (the north wind), Tonga (the south wind), Hauāuru (the west wind), and Marangai (the east wind). She encourages us to get to know this family well, embrace its strength and prepare for any challenges it creates.

Pōhutukawa - Pōhutukawa holds tight to our memories of treasured people who have passed on. She encourages us to take time to remember them, and to acknowledge their impact on our lives.

Hiwai-te-rangi - Hiwai-i-te-rangi is a wishing star, who helps us to recognise our hopes, dreams and aspirations for the coming year. She encourages us to hold firm to our goals, and seek out opportunities to see them realised.

Matariki - Matariki loves to gather the people together, and to connect them with our environment. She encourages us to do the same, as often as possible.