

THUNDERSTORM AND RUG MAKING SEASON

High west wind electrical storms occur in this early autumn period over the fourth lunar month from March 16th to April 12th. Because of these electrical storms and heavy downpours, activities were again fairly village centred.

It was during this time that the pelts accumulated over the eel and inter-clan business season were converted to rugs, cloaks, carry bags and suchlike. This also included the art work decorating the leather side of the pelts.

The decorated leather side of a possum-skin cloak was worn on the outside, thus giving a waterproof protection. The soft fur was therefore worn on the inside, giving warmth and comfort against the skin. It was a matter of some amusement to Aboriginal people when European photographers always asked them to turn their coats inside-out and have the fur showing for the photograph.

The first signals for the end of the storm and rug making season and start of the following cool dry autumn burning off period, were the nesting behaviour of possums and tunneling behaviour of wombats. From this time on wombats would be seen during the daytime either renovating their burrows or just sun baking. However the actual commencement of the burning off season in mid-April each year only began with the advent of the first morning dew.

This morning dew is of course absent in the hot dry north wind months and the period of late summer electrical storms. Its arrival was the signal that this moisture would facilitate slow burning of the accumulated and now dry grasses.

The now moderate westerly breezes, together with the morning dew would facilitate the use of 'cold fires' that burnt more slowly and could be kept out of the tree canopies. Keeping the fires out of the tree canopies of course ensured that the burning-off did not turn into bushfires, but these cold fires nonetheless generated a great deal of smoke which could be seen all over the countryside in the next season