

Amerika Samoa Lunar Calendar

January 30, 2025 - February 17, 2026



Western Pacific Regional
Fishery Management Council
WPCOUNCIL.ORG

'Afa (Coconut sennit)

'Afa is handmade sennit from dried fibers of the husk of certain varieties of *niu* (coconuts), particularly the *niu'a*. It is a traditional material highly valued for its strength, durability, and versatility. 'Afa is used for boat and house building, tools, ornaments, and fishing methods like 'enu (fish basket traps) or fishing pole line.



'Afa is often braided or twisted and used as a fishing line for traditional fish hooks.

Photos: Jean P. Haydon Museum



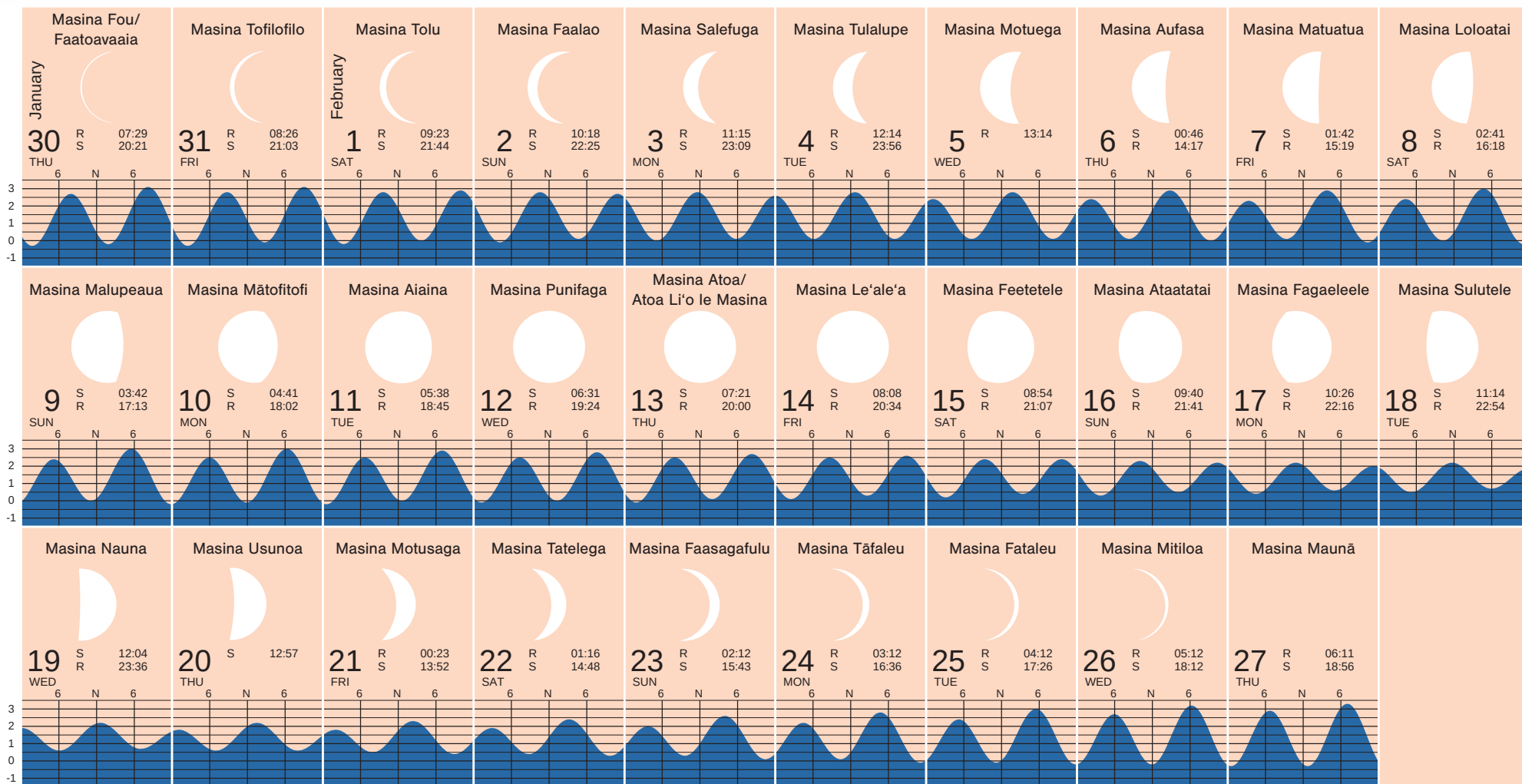
Young *niu'a*. Photo: Jennet Chang

Niu'a fruit. Source: coconutsamoa.blogspot.com



Toeutuvā

January 30 - February 27
Ianuari 30 - Fepuari 27, 2025



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Ato (Woven basket) and Tuluma (Wooden container)

Ato (or ola) are baskets woven from *niu* fronds. They serve as a versatile tool in the Samoan culture, being used both to carry fish and hold goods cooked in an *umu* (traditional Samoan oven).

Above: Ato.

Below: Tuluma.

Photos: Jean P. Haydon Museum

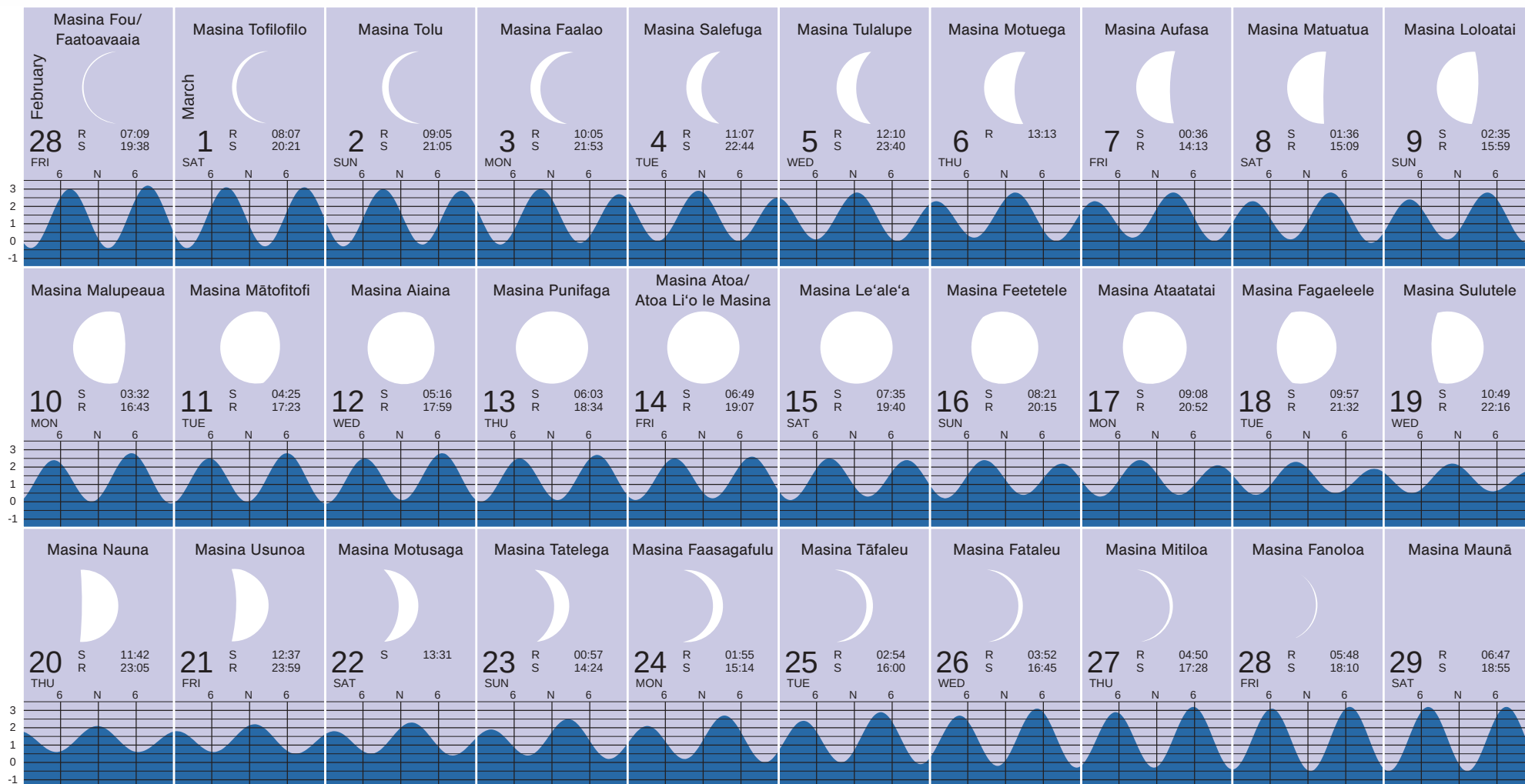


Another useful container is a waterproof *tuluma*, used to store fishing gear or personal items while at sea. It is carved from wood with attached cords made from 'afa for easier transport.

Fa'aafu

February 28 - March 29

Fepuari 28 - Mati 29, 2025



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Atule being gathered into a large tapa'au.

Photos: Manu'atele Community Worldwide



Lauloa (Communal net fishing)

Lauloa is a fishing method enjoyed by whole villages. The *tautai* (head fisherman) sets the time—always on a falling tide—and directs the entire operation. A long sweep made of split *lau* (*niu* fronds) tied to lengths of strong *fue vai* vine is deployed in a wide arc on the reef. Everyone joins in as the sweep is gradually closed. This is accomplished with a great deal of laughter and slapping the water with sticks. The catch is forced into a V-shaped net, which is then pursed and emptied into the *tautai*'s canoe to be taken ashore and divided among the families participating. In Olosega, *tapa'au* (hand woven mats) are used as large fishing nets to harvest seasonal fish like *atule* (bigeye scad).

Other traditional fishing methods include using plants like *futu* (fish poison tree, *Barringtonia asiatica*) and 'avasā (wild indigo, *Tephrosia purpurea*) to stun fish, often during *lauloa* drives. In one technique, the grated seed of the *futu* was mixed with wet sand to form *maunu* (balls), and then introduced into the water. *Fue* 'o'ona (common derris, *Derris trifoliata*) and 'ava *niukini* (New Guinea kava, *Derris malaccensis*) were also used, though some are now banned by village councils.



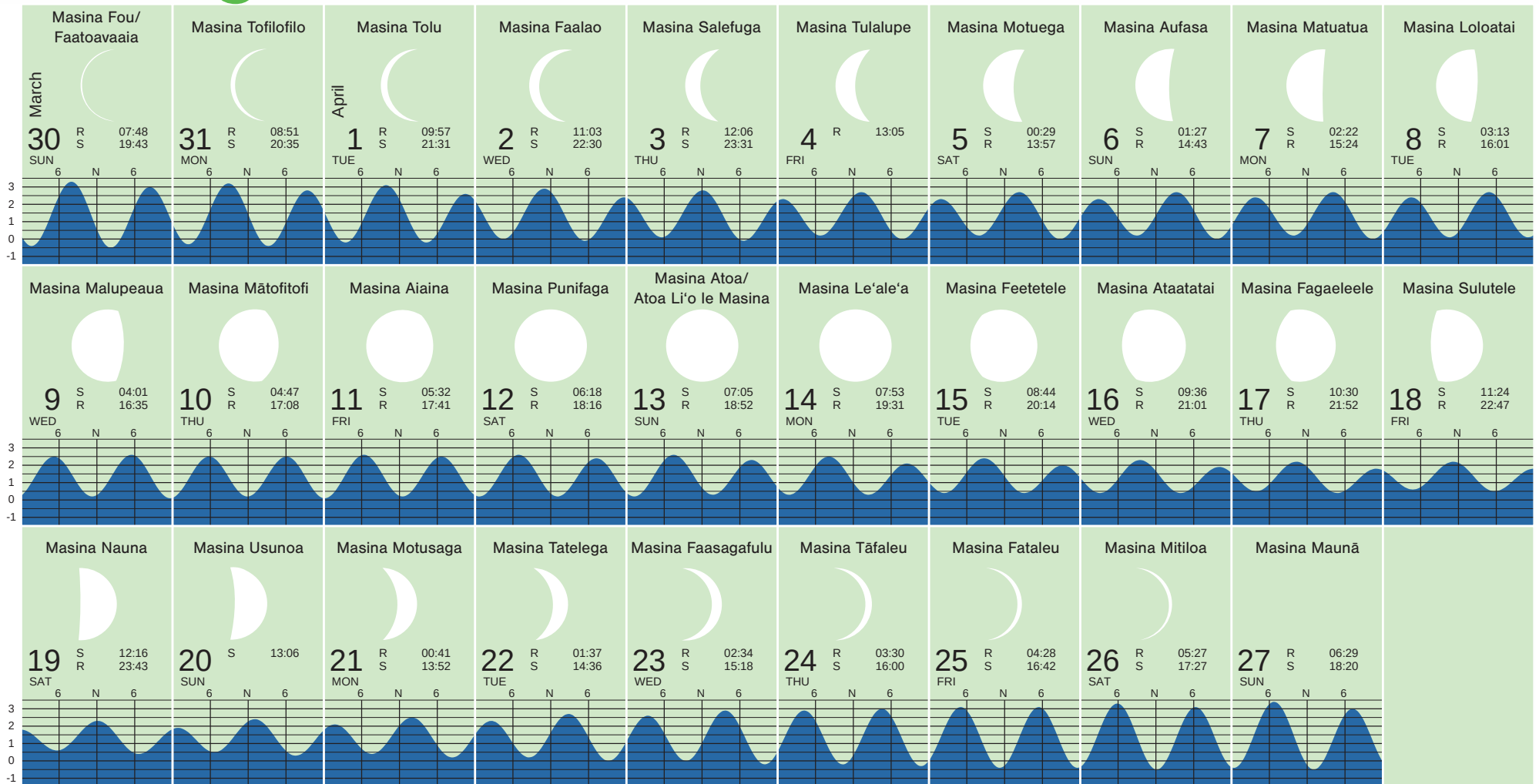
Futu and 'avasā.

Photos: Forest and Kim Starr

Fānoga

March 30 - April 27

Mati 30 - Aperila 27, 2025



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Kili (Throw net)

Kili is a traditional fishing method Samoan villagers continue to practice to this day. There are different types of *kili*. One is a simple, straight net a few fathoms long and approximately five feet in depth, with a top line of wooden floats and a bottom line of sinkers. Another is a circular net with weights along the edge. It is cast to catch small fish in the calm shallow waters of bays and lagoons. The technique requires skill to spread the *kili* evenly, which is often passed down through generations.

Note: 1 fathom = 6 feet



Above: Net fishing by the villagers of Fagasa around 1950.

Right: Man in a *paopao* (fishing canoe) drawing in a *kili*, circa 1984.

Photos: Feleti Barstow Public Library

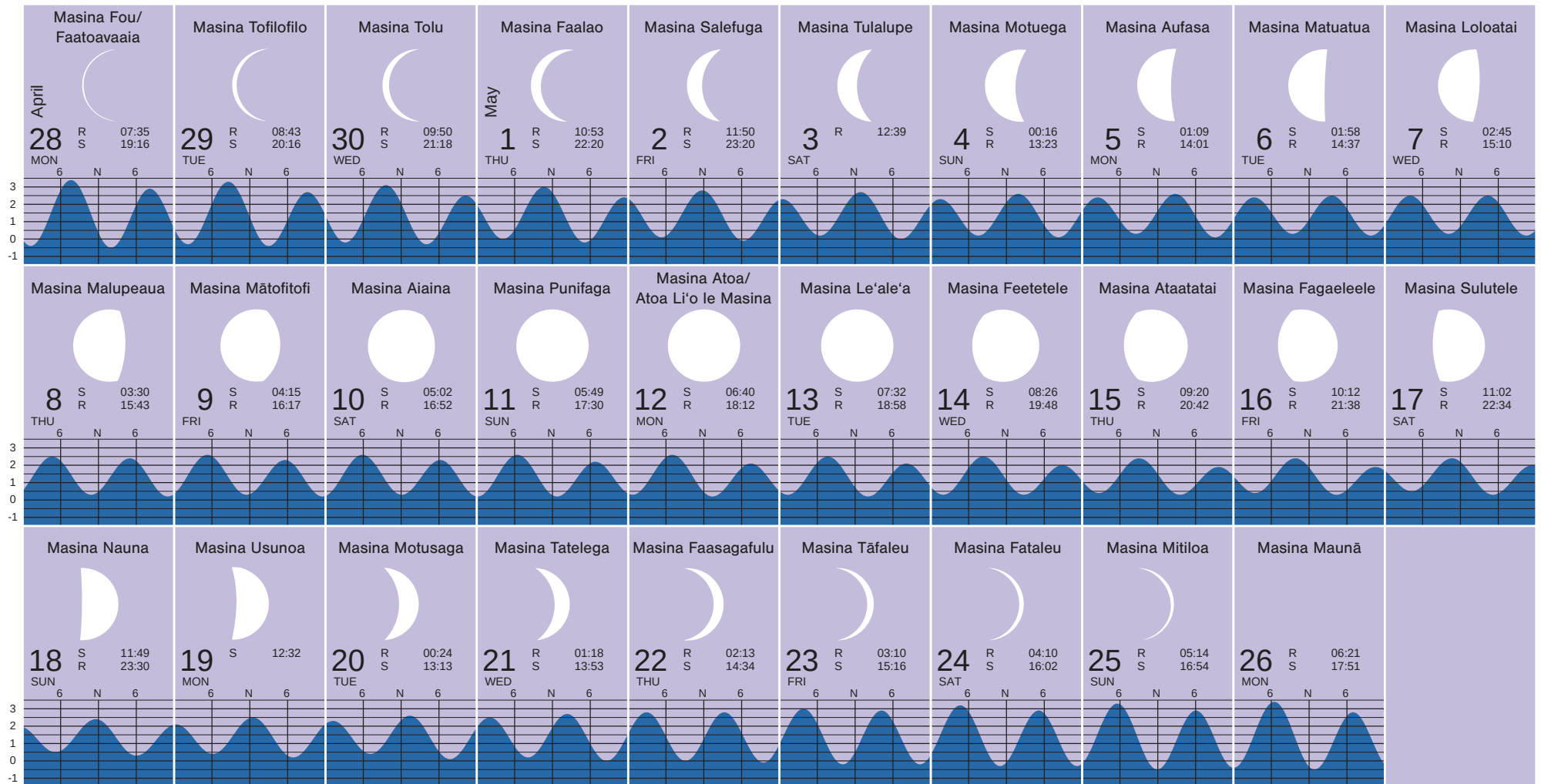


Photo: NPS of American Samoa

Aununu

April 28 - May 26

Aperila 28 - Me 26, 2025



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Demonstration of a bonito rod, circa 1929.

Photo: Feleti Barstow Public Library



Above: Woman fishing off the Ta'u wharf using a traditional bamboo rod at the Dept. of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR) 2024 Manu'a Flag Day In-Shore Derby.

Photo: DMWR

Fai'ofe (Rod casting)

There are two general styles of *fai'ofe* on the reef, *seu* and *tau*. In both styles, long, flexible bamboo poles and *soga* lines (made from natural fibers) are used with a wide variety of lures, hooks, and bait depending upon the conditions and type of fish targeted.

Seu is done in the shallow waters of the reef flat. It generally involves dipping the pole along the surface of the water. *Tau* (or *tautu*) is pole fishing off the edge of the reef into the deeper waters of the reef face or *ava* (channel through the reef). The hook and lure are cast rather than dipped.

Below: Two men fishing using *atu* (skipjack tuna) rods in colorized photo from the StarKist collection.

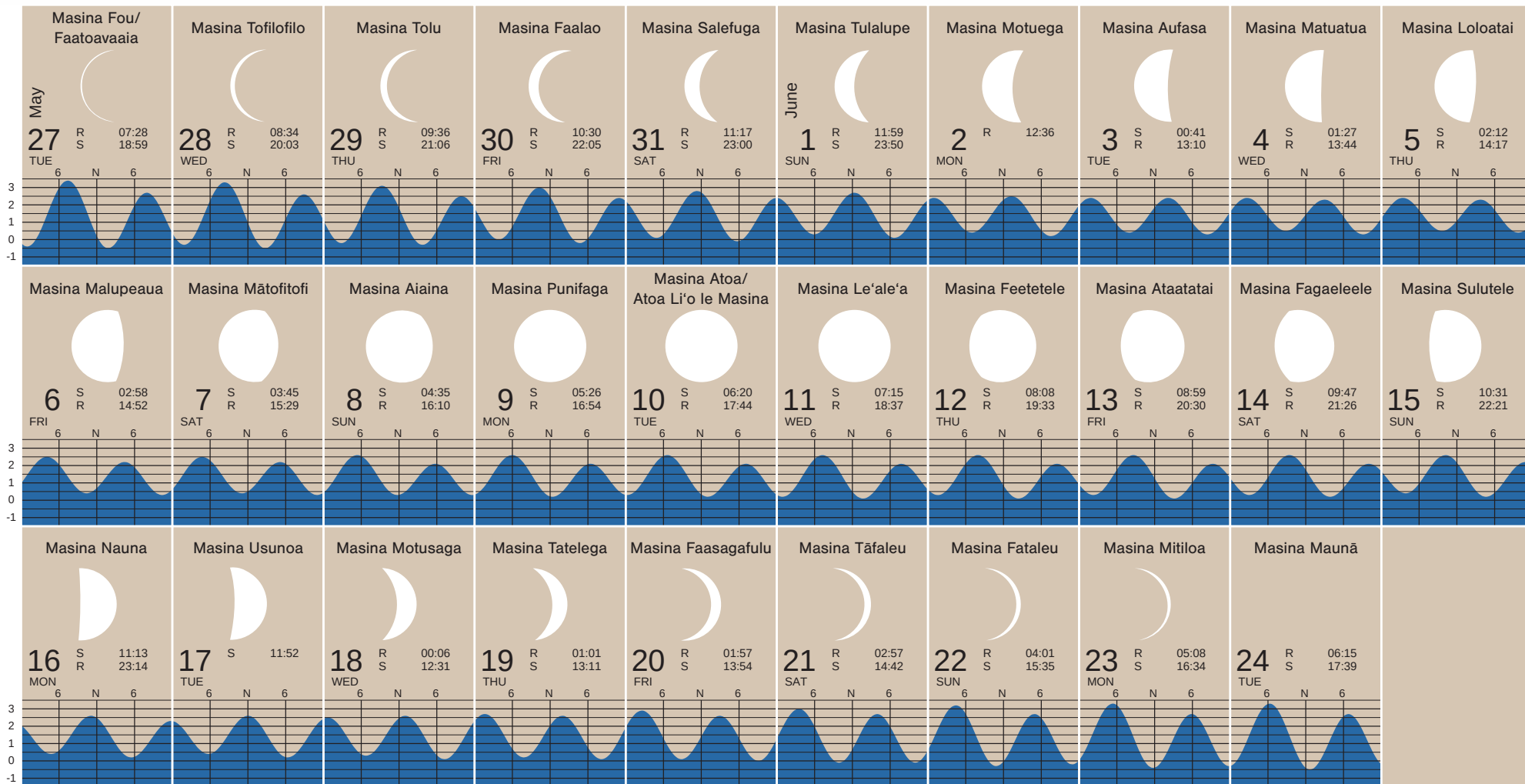
Photo: Jean P. Haydon Museum



Oloāmanu

May 27 - June 24

Me 27 - Iuni 24, 2025



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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'Enu (Fish trap basket)

Women play an important part in traditional fishing. One of the oldest methods still practiced in Manu'a is weaving 'enu, a basket trap made from 'ie'ie vines tied together with 'afa. This trap is used to catch *i'asina* (juvenile goatfish), a favorite in Samoan cooking.

To catch the fish, the 'enu is buried half way in shallow water along a sandy shoreline. The trap is baited with *uga* (hermit crabs) that have been pounded and mixed with sand.

Unlike men, who often fish far from shore using canoes or spears, women usually fish closer to land. They spend time walking along the reefs, gathering shellfish and setting 'enu in the shallow waters.



Photos: (above) NPS of American Samoa, (right) Jean P. Haydon Museum



i'asina caught in an 'enu in Ofu, Manu'a.

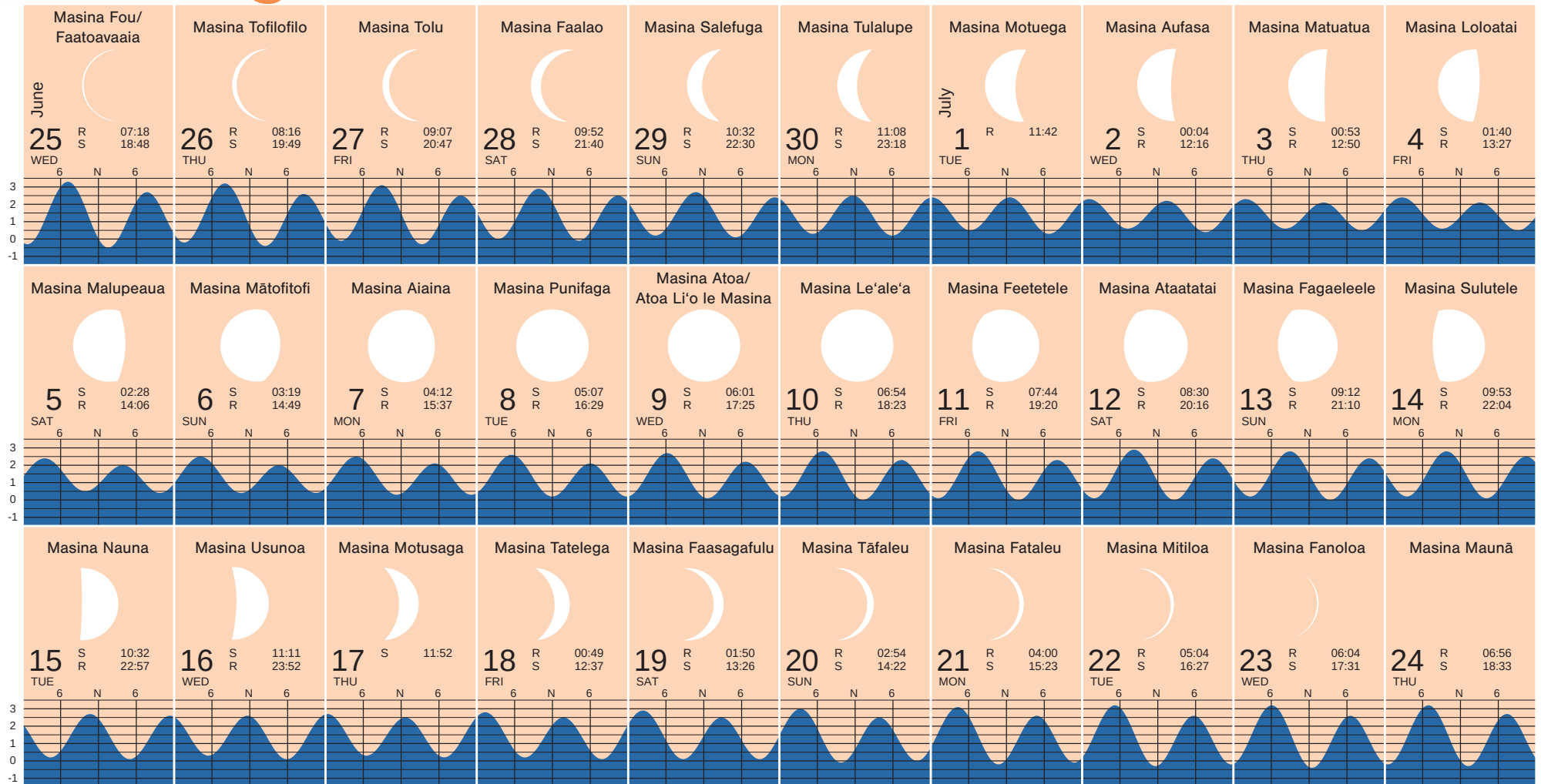
Photo: Joyce Malae-Anetipa, Manu'atele Community Worldwide



Lotuaga

June 25 - July 24

luni 25 - Iulai 24, 2025



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Left: Four pointed tao, made with a 3.5-foot-long bamboo shaft, and pointed ends of hard wood, tied with a strip of *fau* (beach hibiscus) bark.

Right: Another tao design uses a 3-foot-long bamboo shaft with a flat, pointed metal tip approximately 6 inches in length by 1 inch wide, held together with *fau* bark.

Photos: Jean P. Haydon Museum



Tao (Fishing spear) and Tuli a'au (Sling spear)

Using a tao, fishermen target fish that gather in the shallow waters of the reef flat during high tide and along the reef face. The tao, typically crafted from sturdy materials like wood or metal, features a sharp tip designed for accurate and efficient spearfishing. In general, there are three kinds: one-pointed (*tao mata tasi*), three-pointed (*tao mata tolu*), and many-pointed (*tao fuifui*).

Tuli a'au (sling spear) is a traditional fishing technique often done from *paopao* (fishing canoe). This method involves using a hand-held *tuli a'au*, where fishers, balanced in the narrow, maneuverable *paopao*, paddle quietly through shallow reef waters or nearshore areas to spot fish. The *paopao*'s stability and ease of movement enable fishers to approach fish stealthily, a crucial factor in successful spearfishing.

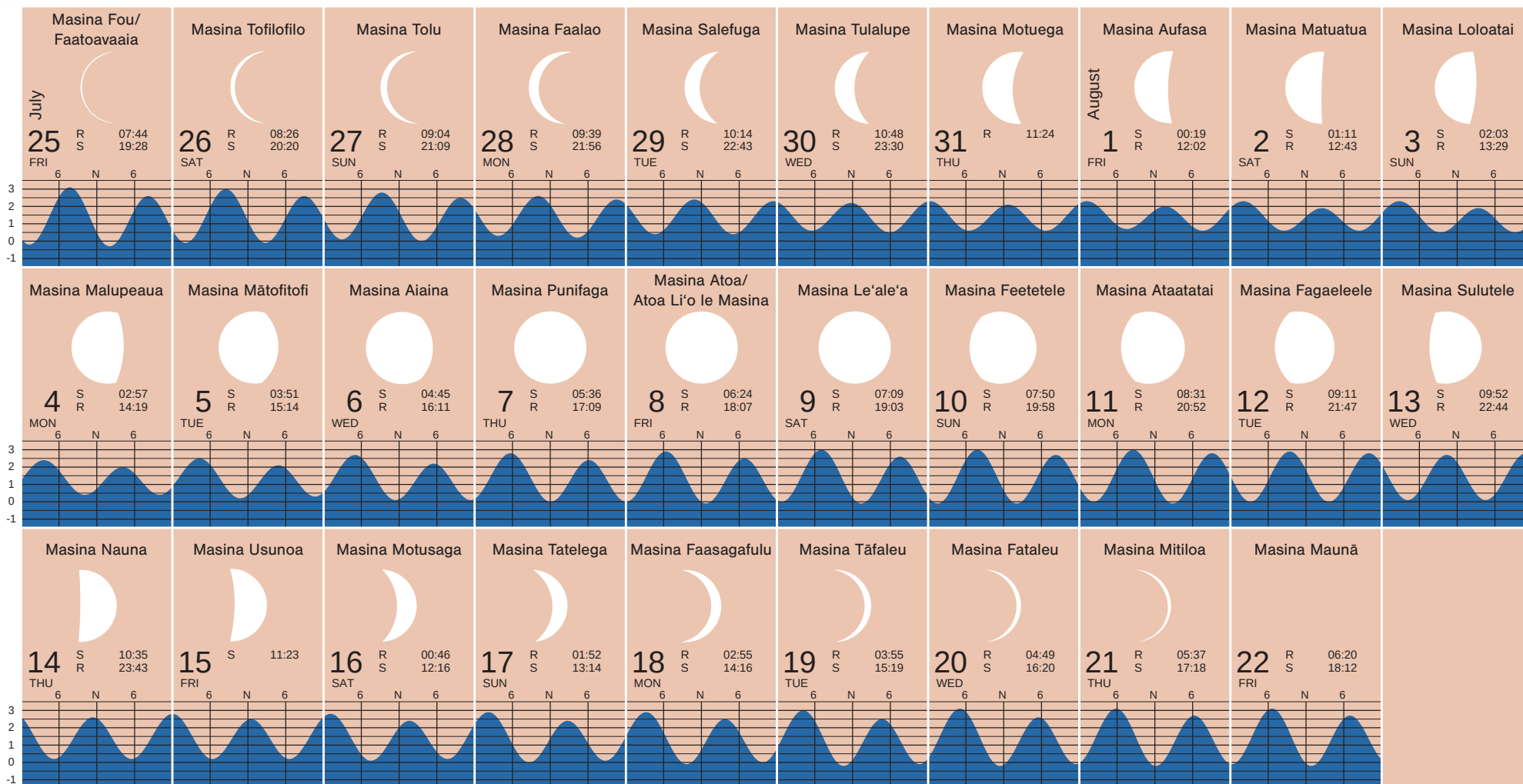


Two young Samoan boys spearfishing in the Pala Lagoon around 1940. Photo: Wayne Forde

Tu'iefu

July 25 - August 22

Iulai 25 - Aukuso 22, 2025



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Mataife'e. Photo: Jean P. Haydon Museum

Mataife'e (Octopus lure)

The *mataife'e* is a traditional Samoan lure made from cowrie shells, a rock and natural fibers, used to attract and catch the elusive *fe'e* (octopus). Its design resembles the *'isumu* (rat), and draws on ancient Samoan folklore involving the *fe'e*, *ve'a* (railbird) and *'isumu*. The tale tells of the *'isumu* outwitting both the *fe'e* and the *ve'a*, inspiring the belief that the *fe'e* is tricked into mistaking the lure for a small rodent. This fishing technique is common across the Pacific Islands, where people tell similar stories and use variations of the lure.

Another method for catching *fe'e* is by using a *sao fai fe'e*—a three to four feet long stick specifically designed for this purpose. The technique involves inserting the stick into likely hiding spots in the coral and twirling it to irritate the *fe'e*, drawing it out from its lair.



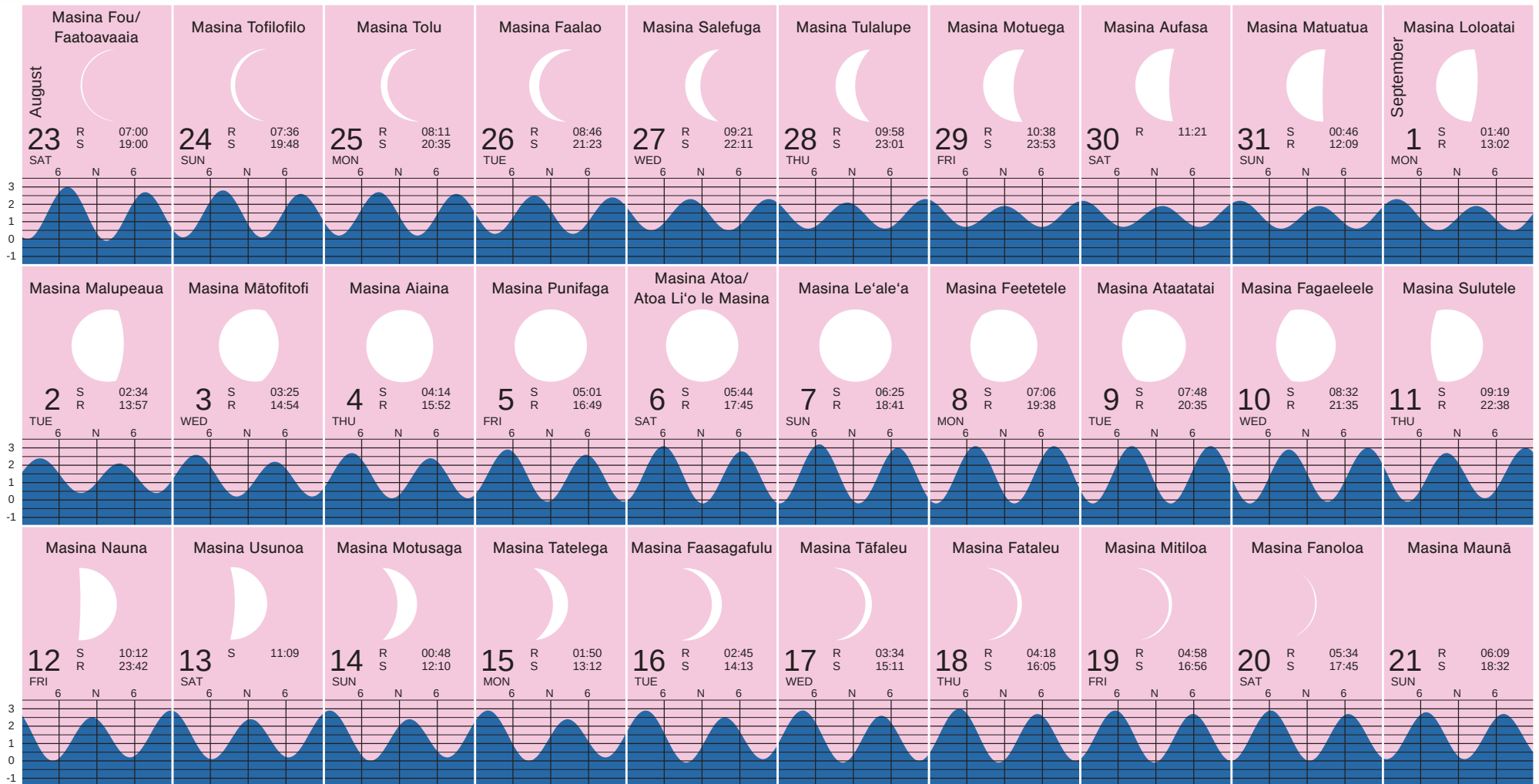
Photos: (left) Manu'atele Community Worldwide, (right) NPS of American Samoa



Mulifā

August 23 - September 21

Aukuso 23 - Setema 21, 2025



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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A traditional va'aalo, paddles and fishing implements. The canoe on the right was made by TC Fuiava and sons Molia and So'o in 1971.
Photos: Jean P. Haydon Museum

Traditional Canoes

The paopao is a small, traditional outrigger canoe used to fish in the lagoons surrounding the islands. Handcrafted from a single log, the paopao is light and sturdy, designed to glide swiftly through the ocean.

The va'aalo is used for fishing *atu* outside the reef. Running the full length of the front and back half deck is a row of white pule shells. It can carry two to three people. It's traditionally made from planks with 'afa to keep the boat as light as possible. With its outrigger for balance, it allows fishermen to travel beyond the reefs to catch fish that live in deeper waters using handlines, nets or spears.

The traditional 'alia, or war canoe, was a double canoe between 50 to 60 feet long and connected by a deck of large cross beams. It was a fast sailer with a triangular sail made of pandanus (*Pandanus tectorius*) matting, and was used for long-distance voyaging. In calm weather, the 'alia was propelled with large paddles, with two men handling one paddle.

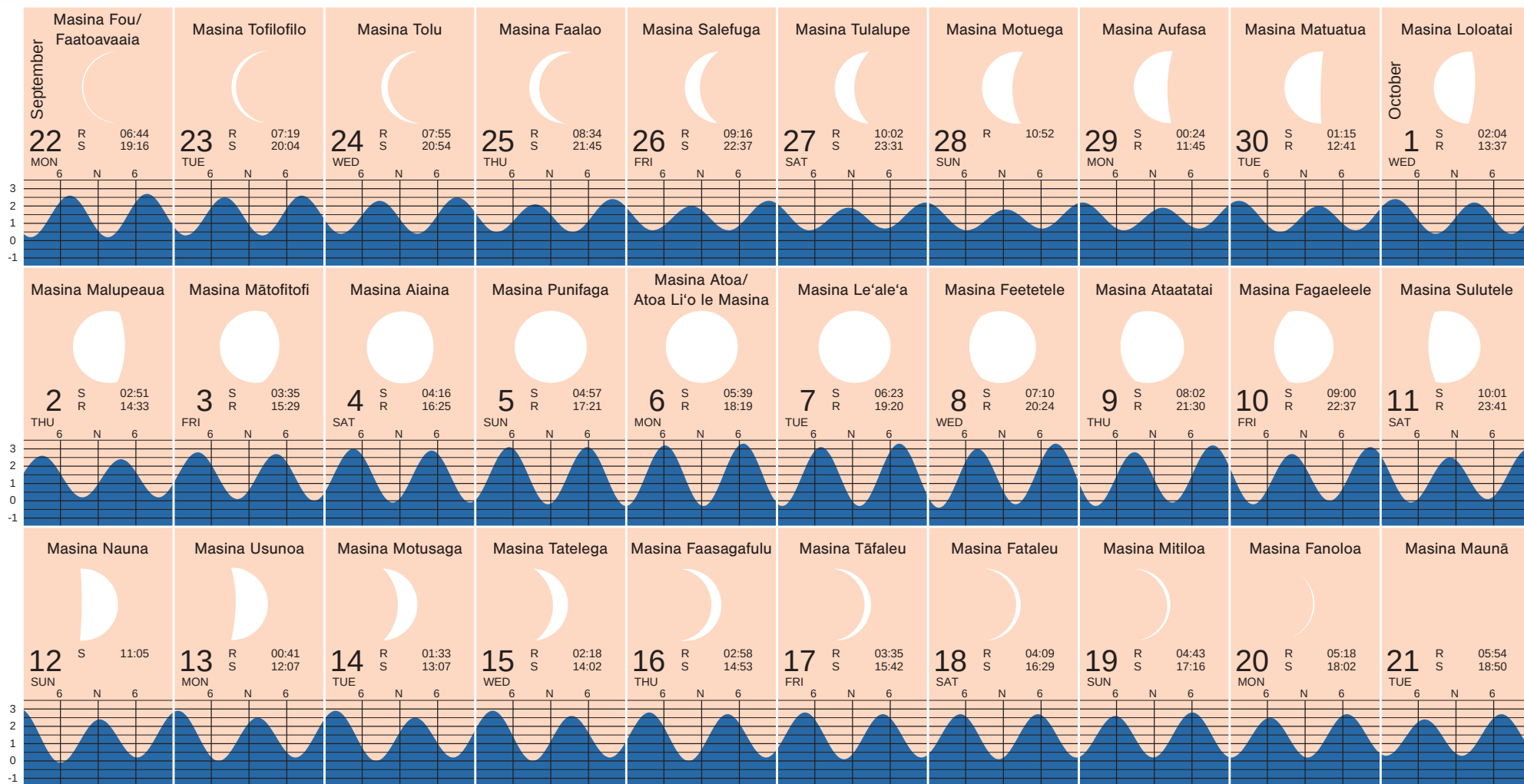


Samoan 'alia, with a tall watch tower, circa 1890-1910.

Photo: Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago

Pālalomua

September 22 - October 21
Setema 22 - Oketopa 21, 2025



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Ka Palolo (Palolo harvesting)

Palolo, a seasonal reef worm, is a traditional delicacy in Samoa, which the community eagerly awaits each year. In the past, people used beautifully crafted, small funnel-shaped baskets to catch *palolo*, as noted by Stair in 1897. By 1927, these baskets were replaced by thin gauze nets, with some repurposing gauze from naval infirmary supplies in Manu'a.

Traditionally, *palolo* were baked in bundles wrapped in leaves, or eaten raw. A common preservation method involved wrapping the *palolo* in banana leaves and keeping them fresh throughout the year by re-cooking and pouring coconut milk on them.

Today, *palolo* fishing remains a significant part of Samoan culture, bringing people together to honor this ancient tradition and their deep connection to the ocean.



Samoans enjoy *palolo* prepared in various ways; some even prefer it raw.

Photo: Manua'tele Community Worldwide



Photo: Apelu Milo

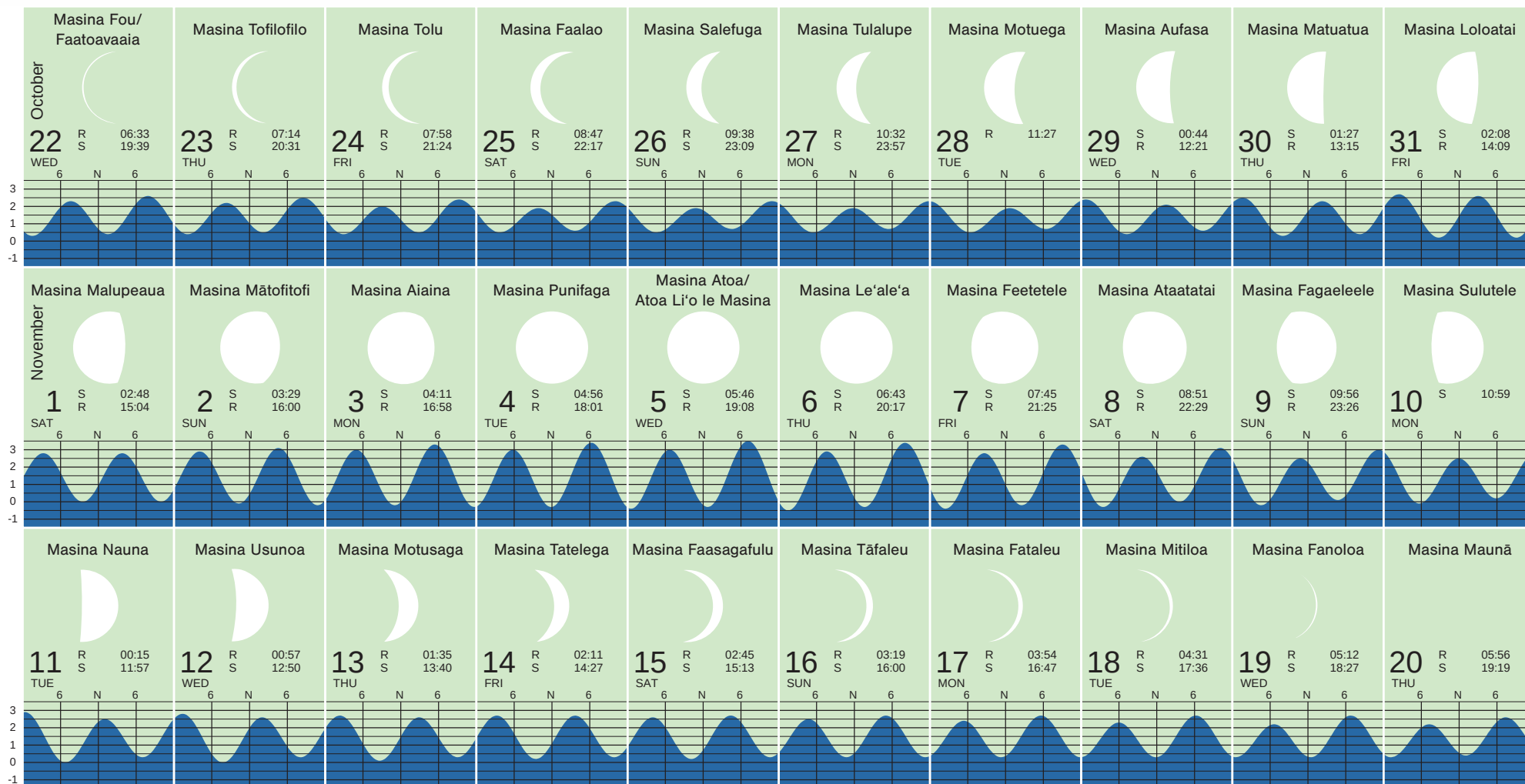
Right: Man with a *palolo* net, circa 1910.

Photo: The Museum of Samoa



Pālalomuli

October 22 - November 20
Oketopa 22 - Novema 20, 2025



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Matau (Fish hooks)

The general Samoan name for hook is *matau*, with more specific names given to hooks using different methods to attract fish, such as baited hooks, gorges, and trolling lure hooks. The oldest hooks were made from the shells of *alili* (turban snails, *Turbo spp.*). They have been found at two of the earliest known sites in American Samoa, the To'aga site on Ofu Island in Manu'a, and the Aganoa site on Tutuila (Kirch, 1993; Pearl and Sauck, 2007).

Gorges are early hook-like tools made from bone, wood, or stone, with sharp ends. When a fish swallows the baited gorge, it turns sideways to lodge in the fish's throat, allowing it to be pulled in. Gorges are some of the oldest known fishing tools, predating modern curved hooks.

The *pa atu*, also called the bonito hook, is specifically designed for catching *atu* (*Katsuwonus pelamis*).

The *pa seuseu* is a small trolling hook used to catch various small fish like *gatala* (groupers, *Epinephelus spp.*, when ~6 inches long), 'ata'ata (*Epinephelus spp.*, when >12 inches long), *matamu* (emperors, *Lethrinus spp.*), *malai* (snappers, *Lutjanus spp.*), *umiumia* (threadfins, *Polydactylus spp.*), and *patagaloa* (wrasses, *Thalassoma spp.*).



Traditionally fishing implements were crafted from readily available natural materials. Above: *Pa atu*. Below left: *Alili* hook. Below right: Gorges with sinker stone. Cords are hand braided using 'afa and *fau*.

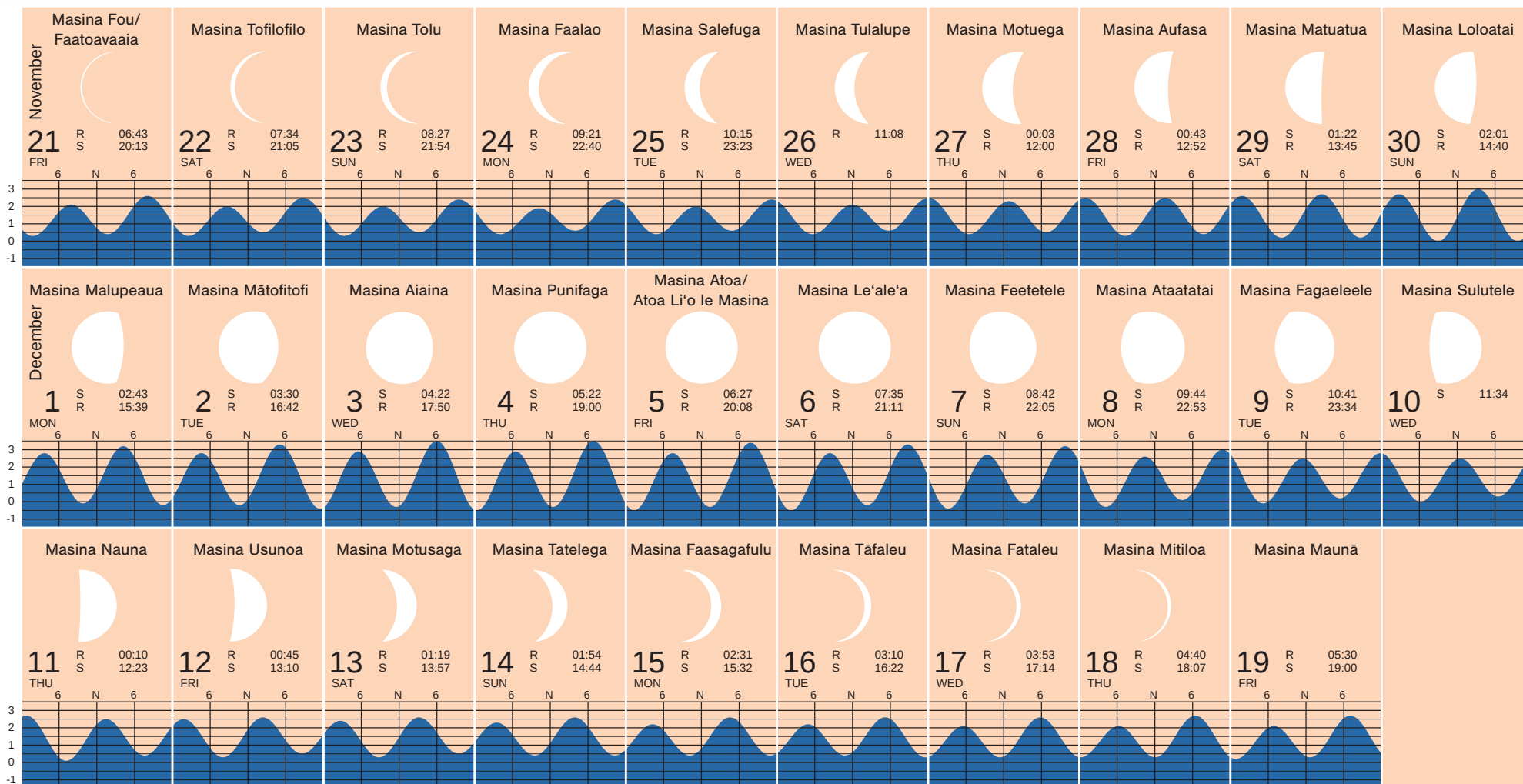
Photos: WPRFMC



Taumafamua

November 21 - December 19

Novema 21 - Tesema 19, 2025



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Tu'i ipu.

Photo: Jean P.
Haydon Museum



Illustration of traditional *malie* noosing technique.

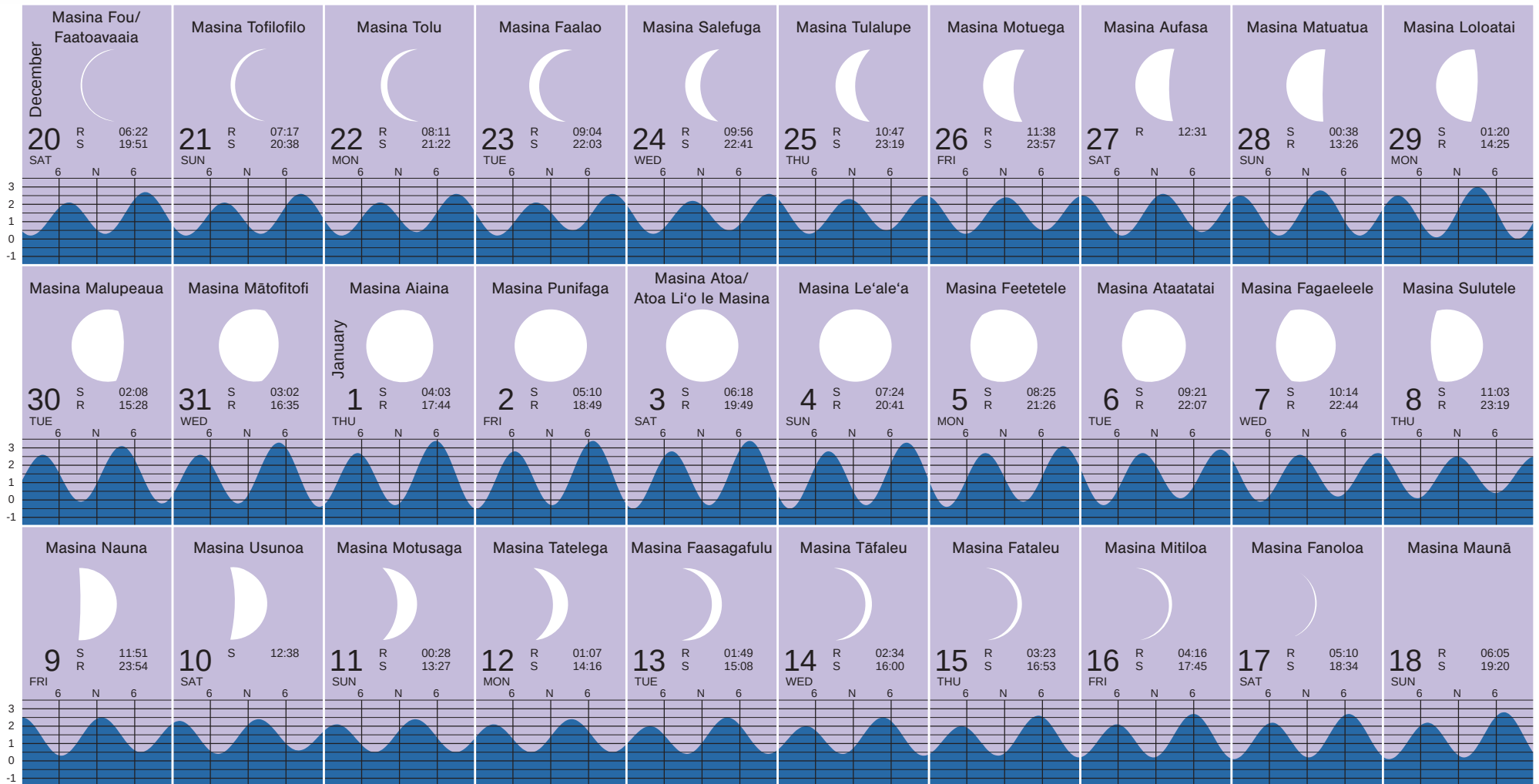
Source: "Fa'atautaiga: Traditional Samoan Fishing Methods," by J. Enright, S. Ortquist and R. LaTour, 1992.

Tu'i ipu (Shark rattle)

The Samoan method of catching *malie* (sharks) involves using a lasso. *Malie* are attracted to the *paopao* with *tu'i ipu* (rattles) made from half shells of *niu* strung on a wooden stick, creating turbulence that mimics the sound of a school of fish. Three types of bait are used: deep bait (old meat on a 10-foot line) is dropped overboard to sink, float bait (dried *atu* heads, fish or salted pork/beef) is on the surface to draw the shark up, and near bait is hung beside the *paopao* to lure the *maile* into position. Once the float bait attracts the *malie*, it is pulled towards the *paopao*, and the near bait is used to get the *malie* close enough to be noosed.

Toetaumafa

December 20, 2025 - January 18, 2026
Tesema 20, 2025 - Ianuari 18, 2026



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



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Reef Gleaning

Reef gleaning is a broad term for the gathering of edible invertebrates that traditionally takes place on reef flats at low tide. Unlike free diving, reef fishing or boat fishing, gleaning is mostly practiced by women. *Naonao* (or *tagotago*) refers to catching fish or *fe'e* by feeling for them with bare hands between rocks.

In the past, during the new moon and full moon periods, when the low tide was in the morning, women went to the dried-up reef lagoons with a short stick, a *sao fai fe'e* and an *ato*. They used the sticks to poke in the reef and catch many species of small fishes and shellfishes, as well as *fe'e*.



Villagers gleaning in the village of Lauili'i.

Photo: Janette Asche



Rochia niloticus (commercial top shell, middle) and *Tectus pyramis* (pyramid top, right) are common species found in American Samoa.

Photo: H. Zell / Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 3.0



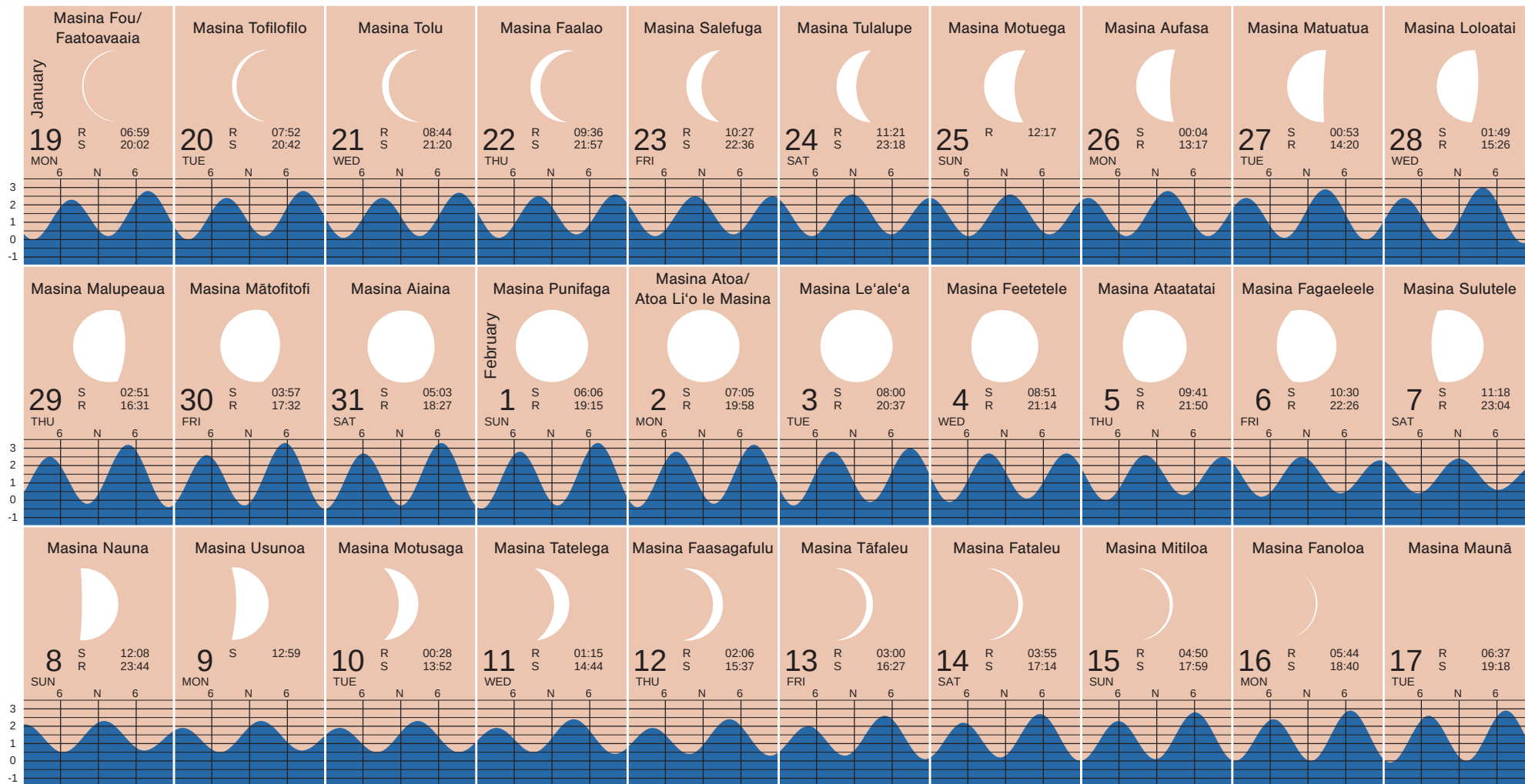
Alili (sea snails) are a Samoan delicacy.

Photo: Manua'tele Community Worldwide

Utuvāmua

January 19 - February 17

Ianuari 19 - Fepuari 17, 2026



MOON-RELATED OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES



Western Pacific
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About This Calendar

The **Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council** has produced traditional lunar calendars for American Samoa since 2007. These calendars follow the traditional Samoan calendar months and are designed to be a resource for the community to learn about the moon phases and their relationship with the tides.

The 2025 *Tau Masina o Amerika Samoa* provides information about traditional methods and cultural knowledge about fishing. The lunar months, moon phases, and traditional calendar months are given in Samoan. The moon phases in this calendar are for Pago Pago Harbor. Data to discern the first day of the lunar month are used with permission from HM Nautical Almanac Office, UKHO and the Keeper of Public Records, UK. The tide charts with moon rise and set times are in Samoan Standard Time for Pago Pago and were provided by OceanFun Publishing, NZ.

A special *fa'afetai tele* lava to the Council's American Samoa Advisory Panel members for their content editing and photo contributions. Additional thanks to Aiono Keseta Okenaisa Fauolo, Samoan Studies Institute Director at the American Samoa Community College, for her guidance on the Samoan lunar month names; to the National Park Service of American Samoa and the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources for photo contributions; to Chris Ausage from the American Samoa Historic Preservation Office for his research; and to the Feleti Barstow Library and the Jean P. Haydon Museum for their support.

Sources

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For an electronic version of this calendar, go to www.wpcouncil.org/educational-resources/lunar-calendars. Send us an email at info@wpcouncil.org to let us know how you use our calendar!

About the Council

The **Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council** was established by Congress in 1976 to manage fisheries in the offshore waters surrounding Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, Hawai'i and the U.S. Pacific Remote Island Areas. The fisheries in federal waters surrounding American Samoa are managed under the American Samoa Archipelago and Pacific Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plans. Traditional knowledge and wide community involvement are integral parts of the ecosystem-based approach to fishery management.



Faisua (giant clams, *Tridacna* spp.) are a valued marine resource traditionally gathered through reef gleaning. They are vital to the health of coral ecosystems, filtering water and providing habitat for other marine life. Photo: NPS

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Front cover: Traditional fishing methods like reef gleaning and using a *kili* (throw net) are still practiced to this day.

Photo: Manua'tele Community World wide and NPS