

## Predicting the weather

While forecasting methods and weather information availability have improved, it is still important to be able to have some idea of likely prevailing conditions without outside data. Forecasters can often get it wrong and weather up in the hills can often be much different to those predicted at sea level so it is important to be aware of bad weather signals. This will at the very least stop you getting really wet and can even save your life! By knowing there is bad weather coming you can pitch your tent early; keep to lower ground or plough on for a little bit longer than you planned, safe in the knowledge there is guaranteed good weather.

There are a huge number of ways to predict the weather but this can prove to be a bit of a minefield when trying to work out which is an old wife's tale and which is an accurate predicating technique. Hopefully this guide will shed some light on the matter...

1. The first and most obvious sign to look for is the **wind**, what it is doing will ultimately determine whether you are wet and miserable or warm and happy. Look out for sudden wind changes which indicates a new weather front coming in, also be aware of high gusts of wind which indicate the imminent threat of stormy weather. A good little trick to assess whether the wind is coming from an unusual angle is to see if the local trees are showing the underside of their leaves. The leaves will grow so that when the wind blows from the usual direction they will still face the sun so when the underside of the leaves are showing you know some unusual weather is on the way! Another good sign to look for is if you are using your stove and if the steam swirls as it ascends it means that low pressure and most likely rain is on the way.



This is never a good sign..!

2. Another good indicator of weather is the amount of **dew** present in the morning. If the grass is dry, this indicates clouds or strong breezes, which can mean rain. If there is dew then it probably won't rain that day( but don't rely on that too much!). However, if it rained during the night, this method will not be reliable (obviously).



3. Look out for **animals** and in particular birds for what they are doing. We've all heard the one about cows sitting down meaning rain. When they sit down it does rain but they sit down more than you'd think! so this is not always a good signal to go on, also when you're on the side of a large hill you're unlikely to be see many cows. You'll see birds wherever you go and you should look out for: They tend to go quiet before a storm and in good weather they will fly higher and will have to fly at lower altitudes when low pressure arrives due to pressure in their ears.

The best signal for oncoming weather is the clouds above, however it does take a bit of a knack to working out which cloud is which and what weather they will bring. Below is a guide to help you:



**Cirrus** - Cirrus clouds are the very high clouds that look like thin streaks or curls, they indicate fair weather. Apart from colder areas where they can group together and signify blizzards



**Cumulous**- These are the fluffy white clouds you will usually see on a warm summers day. If they start to pile on top of eachother this signifies a storm (cumulonimbus clouds)



**Stratus**- These clouds are very low, grey clouds, often making covering the whole sky in . These clouds generally mean rain and lots of it.



**Nimbus**- Huge rain clouds that signify prolonged precipitation and possible thunderstorms.

**Cloud patterns:**



Altocumulous clouds (left), indicate bad weather in the next 36 hours.



Cumulous towers (right) indicates showers later in the day.



Clouds going in different directions usually indicate extreme precipitation (usually hale)

Worksheet- Here's a quick worksheet to hopefully help remind you of the various cloud formations, it's a bit primary school but we thought it was the best way to help you to remember,.. Just fill in the blanks!



**Cirrus-**



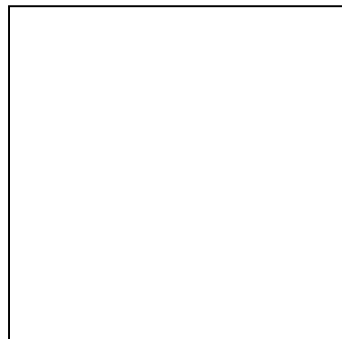
\_\_\_\_\_ - These are the fluffy white clouds you will usually see on a warm summers day. If they start to pile on top of eachother this signifies a storm (\_\_\_\_\_ nimbus clouds)



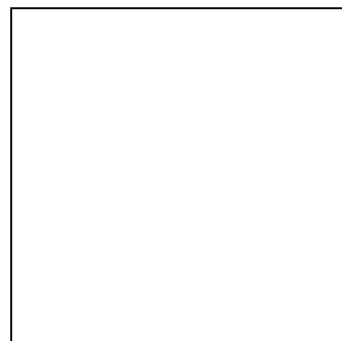
**Stratus-**



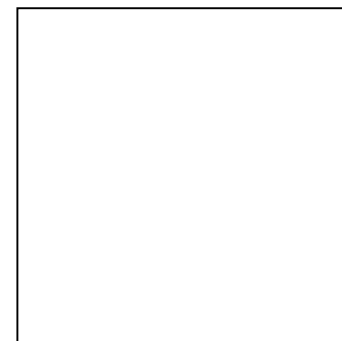
\_\_\_\_\_ - Huge rain clouds that signify prolonged precipitation and possible thunderstorms.



Alto cumulus clouds (left), indicate bad weather in the next 36 hours.



Cumulus towers (right) indicates showers later in the day.



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