Using Clouds to Predict the Weather

by Marci Goodwin, Home School Scientist

On the right: Cirrus Clouds

For centuries people have been using clouds to forecast the weather. High wispy cirrus clouds, sometimes called mare's tails, mean that within 24 hours the weather will change.

Below: Altocumulus Clouds

Altocumulus clouds are mid-level clouds that look like a layer of white and gray puffy cotton across the sky. The presence of these clouds on a hot and humid morning could mean that afternoon rain is on its way.

Fair weather clouds:

Cumulus clouds:

These are fair weather clouds when they are fluffy mounds of white cotton in a blue sky. Fair weather is likely to continue.

Cumulus congestous clouds:

These clouds look like large heads of cauliflower. Although considered fair weather clouds they can sometimes produce short bursts of rain showers.

Storm Clouds:

Cumulodimbus clouds:

These clouds are often called thunderheads. The most dangerous of clouds, they are huge and towering with dark bottoms and are capable of producing great winds, hail, heavy rain, lightening and tornados.

Stratus clouds:

Stratus clouds are low gray clouds that mean misty rain or snow. Sometimes these clouds reach the ground and form fog.