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Weather Folklore: Part 4

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WEATHER FOLKLORE: PART 4

FACT OR FICTION

If the groundhog sees its shadow on February 2, six more weeks of winter remain. If it does not see its shadow, spring has arrived.

Fiction. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration currently estimates Punxsutawney Phil's accuracy at around 50%, making him about as accurate as the proverbial coin toss.

Hawks flying high means a clear sky. When they fly low, prepare for a blow.

Fact. Birds tend to fly higher in dry, clear, high-pressure weather and lower in humid, cloudy, low-pressure weather.

When cows are lying down in a field, rain is on its way.

Fiction. Sometimes cows lie down just to chew their cud and rest their legs a little.

Chickens cackle just before rain.

Fiction. Any backyard poultry keeper knows that chickens cackle whenever they lay eggs.

Cats and dogs eat grass before a rain.

Fiction. Cats and dogs will eat grass anytime they have upset stomachs.

The rain crow calls before a storm.

Partly fact. A rain crow is a cuckoo, typically a yellow-billed cuckoo. These birds make a resonant *ow ow ow ow* on hot, muggy days, the kind that tends to breed thunderstorms. However, personal observation suggests that the cuckoo can occasionally be confused by high humidity without any accompanying rain.

Squirrels gathering nuts in a flurry, will cause snow to gather in a hurry.

Uncertain. Many scientists discount this bit of folk wisdom, saying that the squirrel is just enjoying an unusually bountiful harvest thanks to favorable weather in the spring and summer. Others, however, claim to have used this adage with success. Perhaps squirrels are just naturally busy.

A narrow brown band on a woolly bear caterpillar means a harsh winter. A wide brown band means a mild winter.

Uncertain. Modern scientists typically agree that the woolly bear's band is not affected by coming weather. The width of the brown band on a woolly bear is primarily determined by genetics and developmental stage.



Chill

Ian Huebert

As a general rule of thumb, a forecast based on only one saying should probably be taken with a grain of salt. When several phenomena pointing toward the same forecast are observed, however, the folk sayings may be worth noting.

Perhaps we would all be better forecasters if we were better observers of nature.

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