

## Indigenous Technical Knowledge / Weather Lore



### History...



As we have just discovered, meteorologists now use lots of complicated equipment, such as satellites, to forecast the weather. However, people have always been interested in the weather, particularly farmers, sailors and others whose livelihood depended on it. So before these equipments were available people used all the things around them as a guide. As well as looking at the skies, they also used the behaviour of animals, birds, insects and plants as clues to future weather patterns.

## Old wives tales?



Nowadays, people still disagree as to whether this weather lore is simply superstition and old wives' tales, or whether it can in fact help in predicting the weather. It is undeniable though that some very small changes affect plants and animals more than they affect us, so you will have to form your own opinion once you have read some of the examples given below.

### Plants...



If the **neem** (*Azadirachta indica*) tree bears plenty of fruit, then the total rainfall for the monsoon will be high.

If there are more number of fruits on **neem** and maximum of them ripen on the tree, it is supposed that there will be heavy rain.



If the **Khejri** tree bears good fruit in a particular year good rainfall during next rainy season is predicted and vice versa.

If there are more number of flowers and fruits in **khejri** tree, it is predicted that there will be heavy rain at night.



The fall down and turning blackish colour of **peepal** leaves is an indicator of rainfall.

### Animals...

As well as plants, animals are also frequently used in age-old weather predictions.



### *Lying cows*

This is one of the most well known natural weather indicators. Do you already know it? It is said that when cows are lying down in a field, rain is on its way. This is explained by the fact that the cows sense the moisture in the air and are making sure they have somewhere dry to lie down. Next time you see cows in a field see if they are lying down or standing up.



### *Squirrel's tails*

In a similar way, squirrels are often used to forecast the weather over the coming winter. If their tail is very bushy or they are collecting big stores of nuts in autumn, then a severe winter should be expected. However, little scientific evidence has been found to support this.



### *Girgit colour*

If chameleon (girgit) changes its colour to sky blue, there is a chance of rain in a short period.



### *Snake climbs*

When black snake climbs up the tree, it is an indicator of heavy rain.

### **Humans...**



### *Aches, pain and rain*

Humans have also been known to predict forthcoming changes in the weather. The weather can affect the way we feel and when damp, cold weather is expected, some people experience aches and pains. Others feel strange when it is about the thunder, and our household pets can often sense storms before we are aware of them. Have you noticed your cat or dog change its behaviour or become restless before you hear thunder?



### *Insects...*

**Ants** coming out from their nest carrying their pupae, indicates that rain will come soon.



If the **dragonfly** appears in the rainy season and is observed to swarm in a large group over a water surface (pond), dry weather is predicted. If they swarm over open dry lands or fields, early rainfall is predicted by the farmers.



If **centipedes** emerge from their holes carrying their eggs in swarm in order to shift them to safer place (with in house) the farmer predicts early rainfall.

### *Birds...*



If **tatihari (lapwing)** lays eggs on higher portion of the field, heavy rainfall is predicted during coming rainy season. If the eggs are laid in the lower portion of the field then drought is predicted. These birds never construct their nests but lay eggs on bare soil. If a single egg is laid there will be rainfall only for one month out of four months rainy season. Two eggs mean tow months of rain and so on.



A group of **sparrows** frolicking the sand indicates rainfall that day or the next day. If playing in the water then it is believed that weather will be dry for some days.



The receipt of rain is predicted based on dancing of **peacock** in the farm area.

*Add your own...*



*Are there any other natural weather indicators that you know of? If so, use the Add your own... form to send us any additional ones that have not already been mentioned. Your contributions will be added to the list. These traditional methods for understanding and predicting the weather are also linked to weather sayings. We are sure you all know some expressions that are related to the weather. Can you think of any?*

*How about "Red sky at night, shepherds delight.*

*Red sky in the morning, shepherds warning"?*

*If you know any others, so keep checking! And report to:*

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