

Today:

5 minutes Team Time

Clouds from orographics and weather systems

Cloud image submission: Include

- 1) your edited image
- 2) your original (unedited) image
- 3) the appropriate Skew-T diagram
- 4) a short statement of cloud type and stable or unstable atm.

**Admin stuff:**

- Please sit with your team
- Mac users, in submitted filenames: letters and numbers only, NO SYMBOLS please.
- Don't forget UNCOMPRESSED edited final image, not jpg.
- Please no zips, many steps to put in workflow. You can upload as many files as you need to.
- Clouds 1 due Weds Feb 19
- Team First image due Weds March 5.

Clouds = droplets or ice MOVING UPWARDS

Lift mechanisms:

1. Instability: creates Cumulus clouds
2. Orographics: terrain, mountains
3. Synoptic scale weather systems; local instability. Both at warm and cold fronts; cold air pushes under in a cold front, warm air overruns in a warm front.
4. Convergence: shoreline temperature differences and cyclonic uplift

**2: Orographic clouds, caused by topography, i.e. mountains**

Most common interesting cloud in spring is the

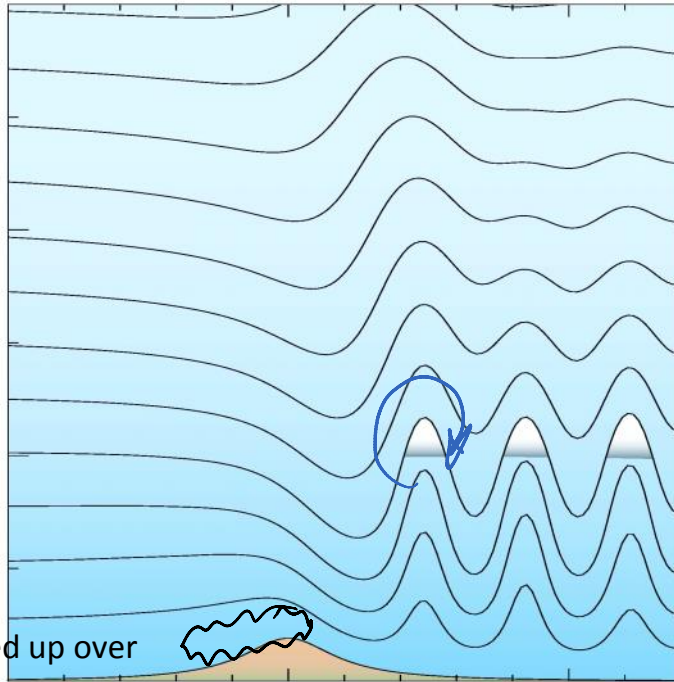
Altocumulus <sup>standing</sup> lenticularis (higher than 6500 ft above local ground level) *ACSL*  
or <sup>^</sup>

Stratocumulus lenticularis (lower)  
or  
Mountain Wave Cloud, trapped or lee

requires STABLE atmosphere: note exception to unstable/cumulus pairing

### STANDING WAVE Clouds Produced by Vertically *Trapped* Mountain Waves

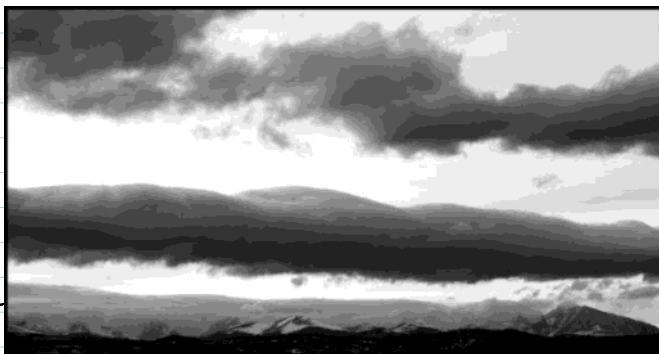
Thomas Carney et al.,  
AC 00-57 Hazardous  
Mountain Winds and  
Their Visual Indicators  
(Federal Aviation  
Administration, 1997),  
[http://rgl.faa.gov/Regulatory and Guidance Library/rgAdvisoryCircular.nsf/0/780437D88CBDAFD086256A94006FD5B8?OpenDocument](http://rgl.faa.gov/Regulatory%20and%20Guidance%20Library/rgAdvisoryCircular.nsf/0/780437D88CBDAFD086256A94006FD5B8?OpenDocument).



Clouds that sit right  
on the Divide =  
FOEHN cloud wall.  
From air being forced up over  
the mountains

Altostratus lenticularis. Typically 1 to 5 wave crests.

Clouds stay stationary, but may move off and reform periodically



Ben Britton, FV 2010

If there's more wave crests, or short wavelengths, it's probably NOT a mountain

wave cloud; more likely altocumulus undulatus, from gravity waves in the atmosphere, like ripples on a liquid surface.

<http://www.colorado.edu/MCEN/flowvis/galleries/2007/assignment2.html>



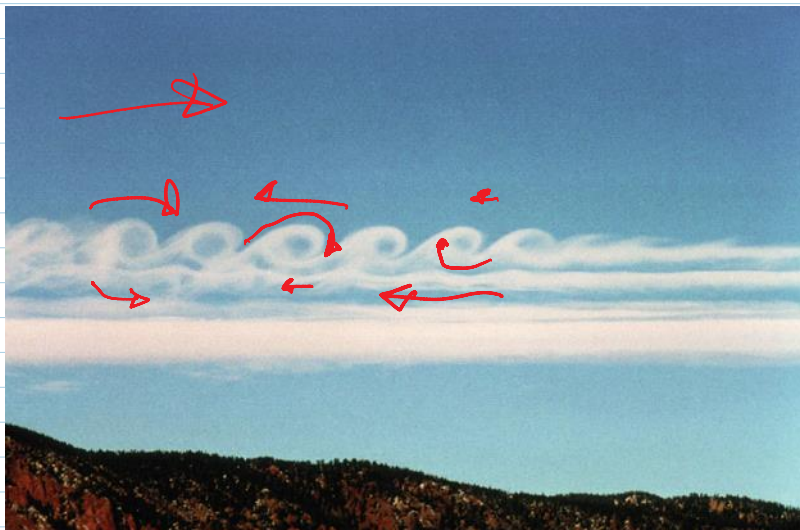
Tracy Eliasson FV 2007

Could also be from wind shear, via the Kelvin Helmholtz instability



Rare to be able to see cross section like this

<http://cloudappreciationsociety.org/collecting/terry-robinson/>

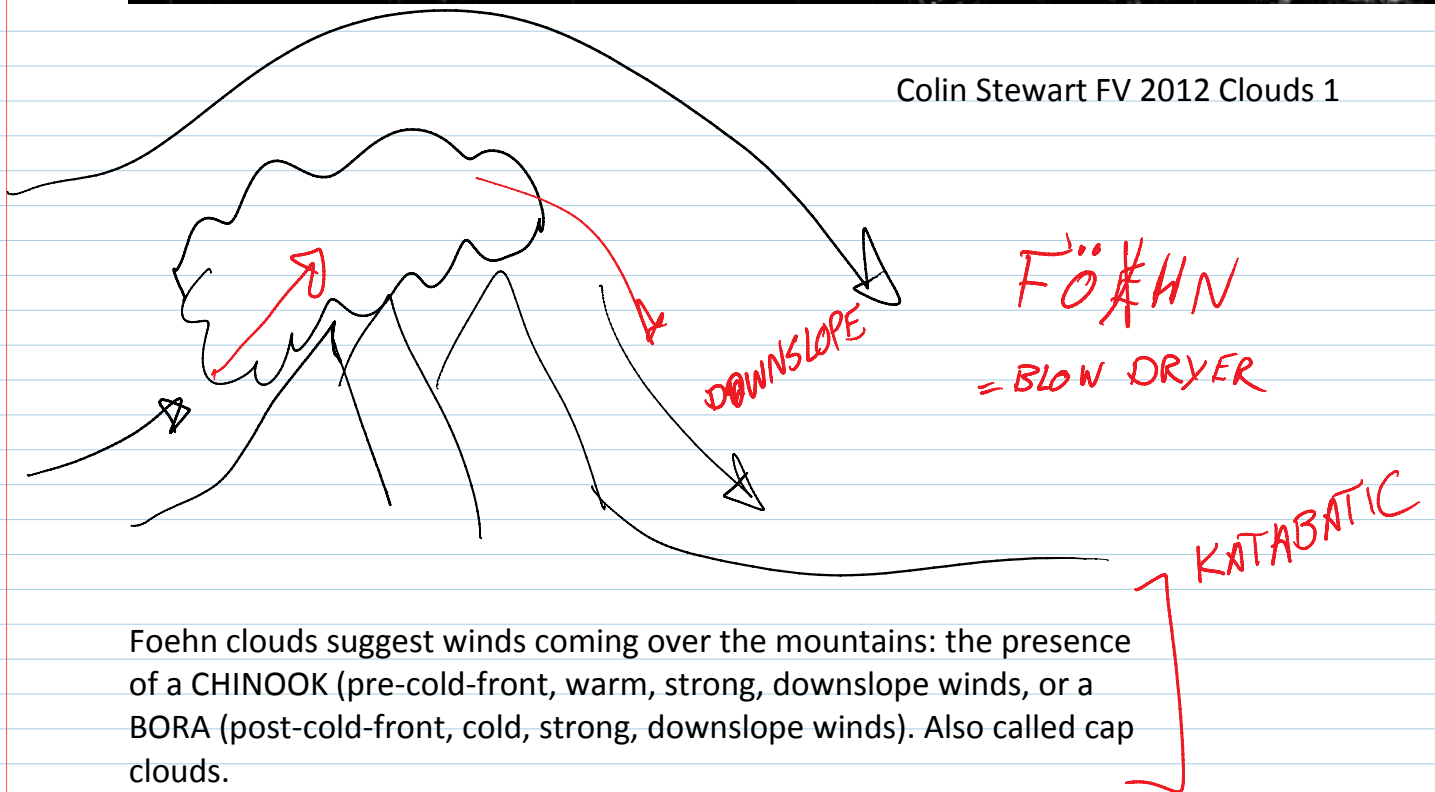


Minute paper: Which way is the wind going?

Where is it faster?



Colin Stewart FV 2012 Clouds 1



Föhn clouds suggest winds coming over the mountains: the presence of a CHINOOK (pre-cold-front, warm, strong, downslope winds, or a BORA (post-cold-front, cold, strong, downslope winds). Also called cap clouds.

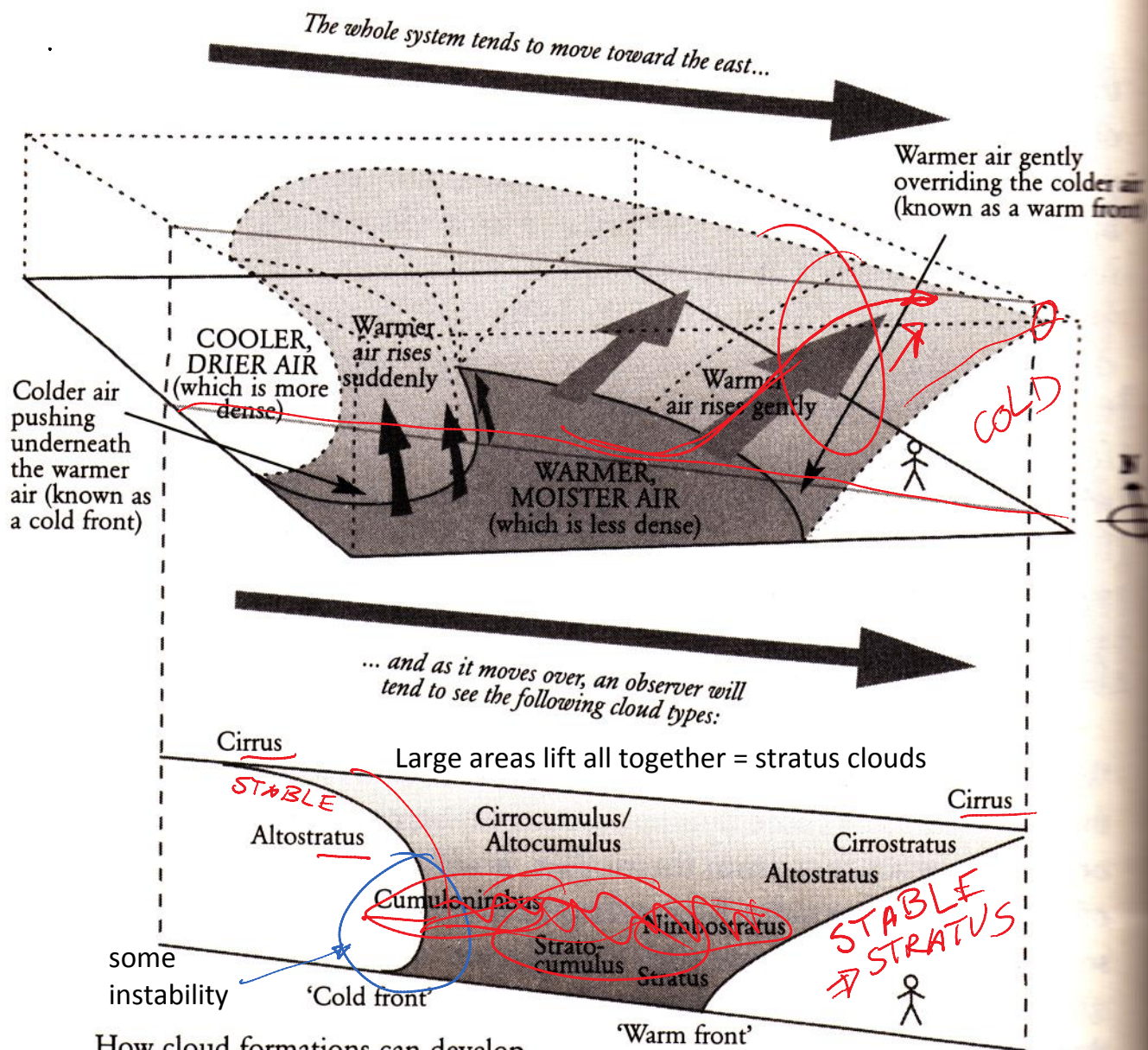
### 3: Synoptic uplift = weather system clouds.

Weather system progressions; 'synoptic scale' uplifts (1000 km across).

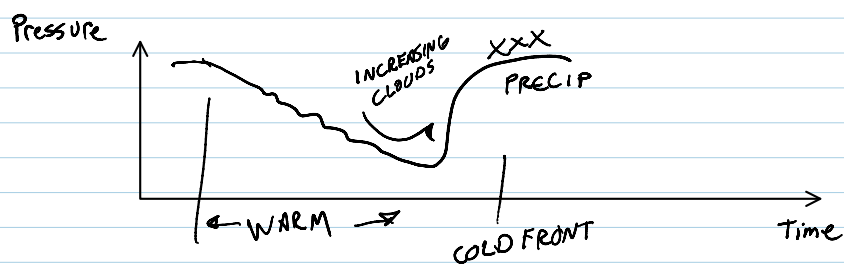
Any type of cloud is possible.

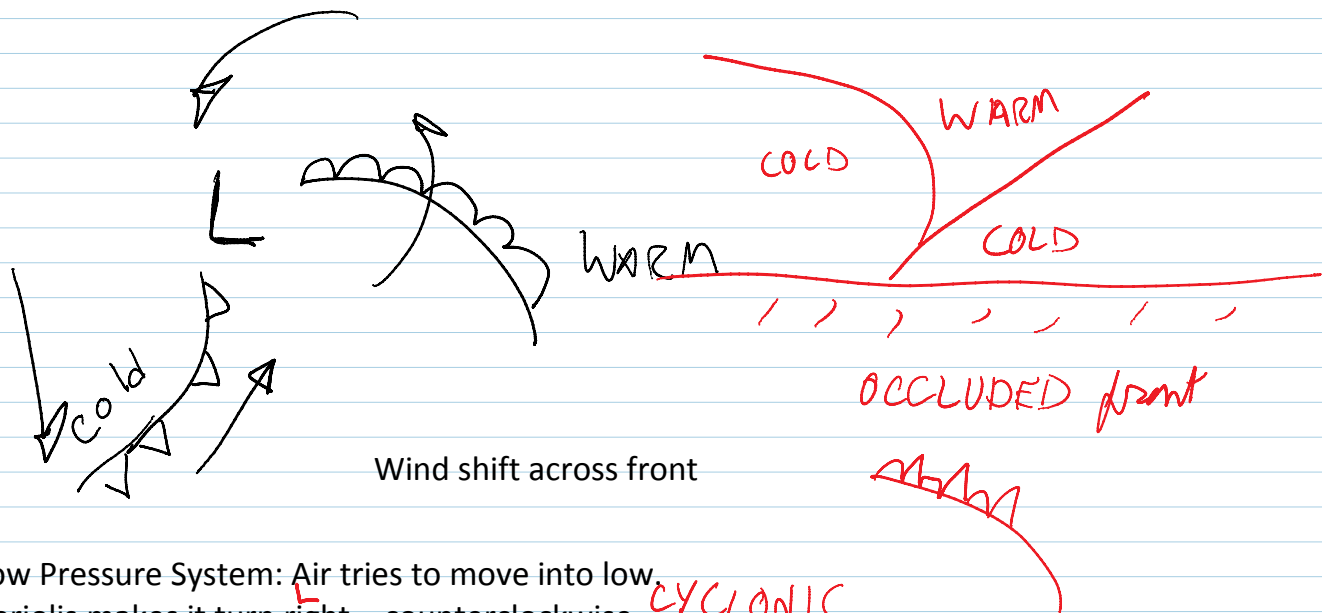
Inserted from: <file:///C:/Users/hertzber/Documents/01CLASSES/FlowVis/Content/scanned images/TypWeatherSystem.tif>





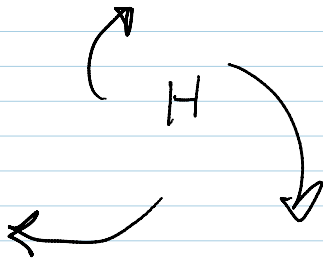
How cloud formations can develop as a region of low pressure, or 'depression', passes over. Those who think this looks complicated will be depressed to learn that it is in fact a very simplified diagram of a weather system.

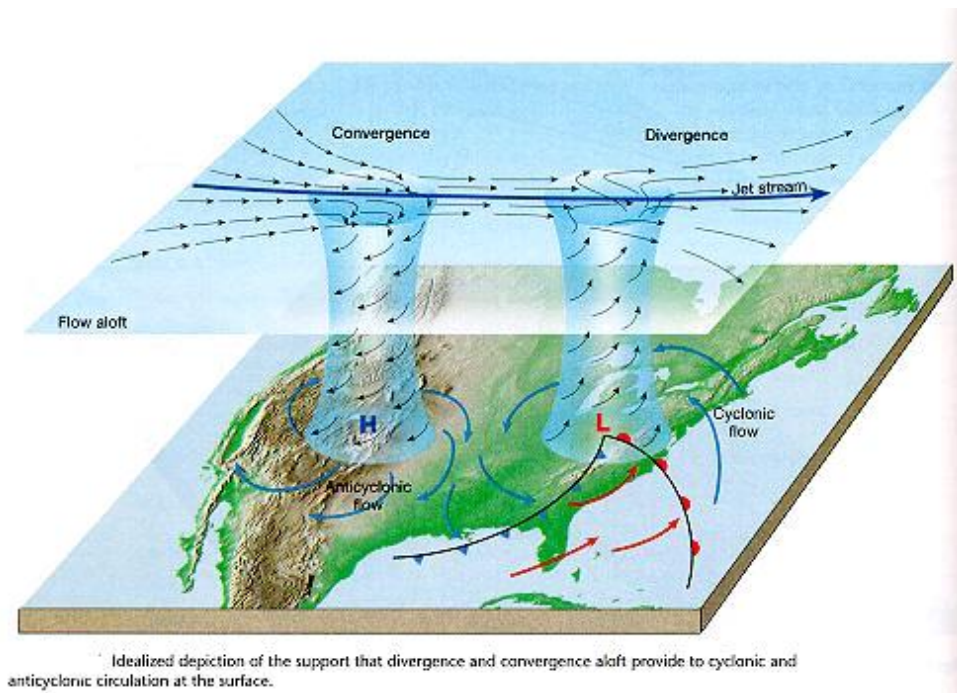




Low Pressure System: Air tries to move into low.  
 Coriolis makes it turn ~~right~~ = counterclockwise **CYCLONIC**  
 circulation. Typically unstable.

High pressure system: Air tries to move out.  
 Coriolis makes it turn right = clockwise **ANTICYCLONIC**  
 circulation. Weak or nonexistent fronts, so no  
 instability.

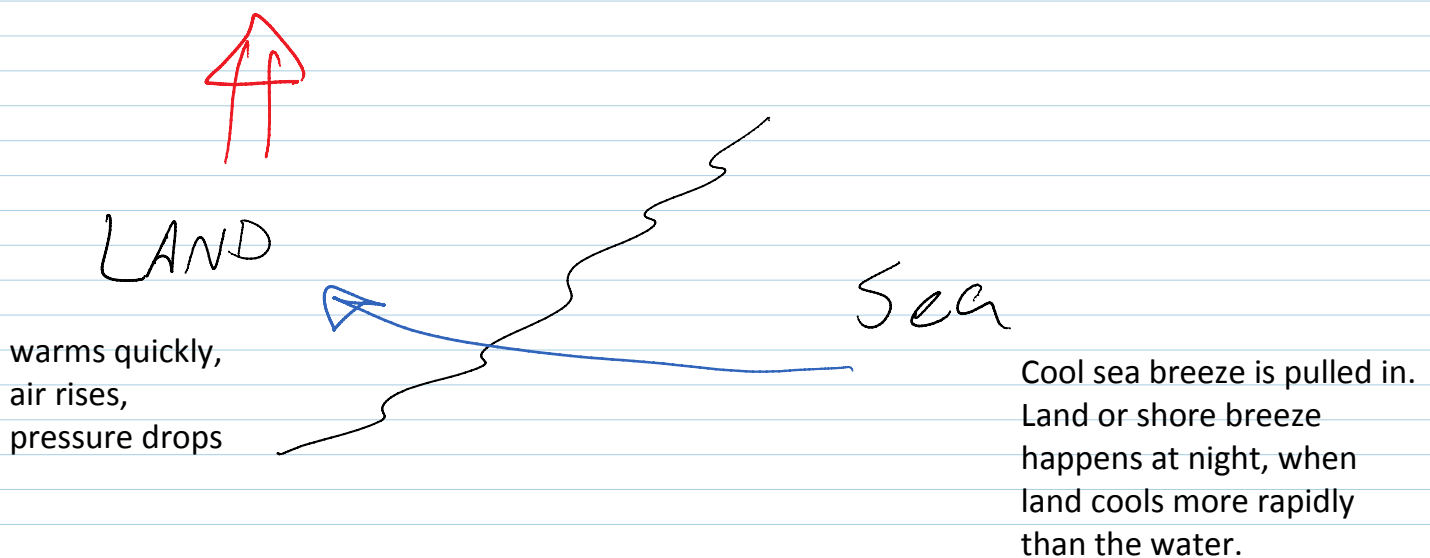




<http://earth.usc.edu/~stott/Catalina/WeatherPatterns.html>

Divergence aloft creates convergence and lift at surface. Pumping action.

#### 4: Convergence uplift along shorelines



CloudClassificationTable.pdf; Copyrighted, but available in D2L.

Also see

[Cloud types for observers \(PDF, 4 MB\) - Met Office](#) 45 pgs

The Cloud Spotter's Guide  
**CLOUD CLASSIFICATION TABLE**  
 Gavin Pretor-Pinney, Perigee Press 2006  
 Clouds are classified according to a 'Latin Linnean' system (similar to the one used for plants and animals), which is based on their heights and appearance. Most clouds fall into one of ten basic groups, known as 'genera'. They can further be defined as one of the possible 'species' for that genus, and any combination of the possible 'varieties'. There are also various accessory clouds and supplementary features that sometimes appear in conjunction with the main cloud types.  
 (If all this Latin freaks you out, don't worry - it freaks me out too.)

GENUS	SPECIES (CAN ONLY BE ONE)	VARIETIES (CAN BE MORE THAN ONE)	ACCESSORY CLOUDS AND SUPPLEMENTARY FEATURES
Cumulus	humilis		pileus arcus
	mediocris	radiatus	velum pannus
	congestus		virga tuba
	fractus		praecipitatio
Cumulonimbus (extends through all three levels)	calvus		praecipitatio pileus
	capillatus	(none)	virga velum
			pannus arcus
			incus tuba
Stratus	nebulosus	opacus	mammata
	fractus	translucidus	praecipitatio
		undulatus	
		translucidus	
Spiralocumulus		perforatus	
	stratiformis	opacus	mammata
	lenticularis	duplicatus	virga
	castellanus	undulatus	praecipitatio
		radiatus	
		lacunosus	
Altostratus		translucidus	virga
		perforatus	praecipitatio
	stratiformis	opacus	pannus
	lenticularis	duplicatus	mammata
	castellanus	undulatus	
	floccus	radiatus	
Altostratus		translucidus	virga
		opacus	praecipitatio
	(none)	duplicatus	pannus
		undulatus	mammata
Nimbostratus (extends through more than one level)		radiatus	praecipitatio
	(none)	(none)	virga
			pannus
Cirrus	fibratus	intortus	
	uncinus	radiatus	
	spissatus	vertebratus	mammata
	castellanus	duplicatus	
	floccus		
Cirrocumulus	stratiformis	undulatus	virga
	lenticularis	lacunosus	mammata
	castellanus		
	floccus		
Cirrostratus	fibratus	duplicatus	(none)
	nebulosus	undulatus	



## HOW TO SPOT CUMULUS CLOUDS

**C**umulus are low, detached, puffy clouds that develop vertically in rising mounds, domes or towers, and have generally flat bases. Their upper parts often resemble cauliflowers and they appear brilliant white when reflecting high sunlight, but can look dark when the sun is behind them. Cumulus tend to be randomly scattered across the sky.

**TYPICAL ALTITUDES\*:**  
2,000–3,000ft  
**WHERE THEY FORM:**  
Worldwide, except in Antarctica (the ground is too cold for thermals).  
**PRECIPITATION (REACHING GROUND):** Generally none, except for brief showers from congestus.



Cumulus humilis



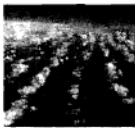
Cumulus mediocris



Cumulus congestus

**CUMULUS SPECIES:**  
**HUMILIS:** Minimal vertical extent. They look flattened and appear wider than they are tall. Do not cause precipitation.  
**MEDIOCRIS:** Moderate vertical extent. Might show protuberances and sproutings at the top. Appear as tall as they are wide. Do not cause precipitation.  
**CONGESTUS:** Maximum vertical extent. The tops are like cauliflowers. Appear taller than they are wide. Cause brief downpours.  
**FRACTUS:** Ragged edges and broken up. Can form in the moist air below rain clouds.

**CUMULUS VARIETIES:**  
**RADIATUS:** When Cumulus have formed into rows, or 'cloud streets', which are roughly parallel to the wind direction. Due to perspective, the rows appear to converge towards the horizon.



Cumulus mediocris radiatus

**NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH...**  
**STRATOCUMULUS:** Cumulus clouds are detached, not joined into a layer like Stratocumulus.  
**ALTOCUMULUS:** Cumulus are not usually as regularly spaced as a layer of the higher AltoCumulus. The clouds also look larger than the clumps of the AltoCumulus. When they are above the cloudspotter, Cumulus appear larger than the width of three fingers, held at arm's length.  
**CUMULONIMBUS:** which often develops from a large Cumulus congestus. A cloud is still a Cumulus when its upper region has a sharp outline, compared with the softer top of the Cumulonimbus.

\* These approximate altitudes (above the surface) are for mid-latitude regions.

Top right: Michael Radu (November 1979). Bottom: Paul Cooper (November 1979).

**C**umulonimbus are thunderstorm clouds, characterised by their enormous height. They are typically tall enough to reach the top of the troposphere, where they spread out in plumes of ice particles that can appear smooth, fibrous or striated. They have dark bases and produce heavy showers – often of hail – which can be accompanied by thunder and lightning.

**TYPICAL ALTITUDES\*:**  
2,000–45,000ft  
**WHERE THEY FORM:**  
Common in tropical  
and temperate regions.  
Rare in polar ones.  
**PRECIPITATION**  
**(REACHING GROUND):**  
Heavy downpours,  
often of hail.



*Cumulonimbus calvus* (means 'bald')



*Cumulonimbus capillatus* (means "hairy")

CUMULONIMBUS SPECIES:

The two species are distinguished by the appearance of the cloud's top.

**GALVUS:** When the upper region is of soft indistinct flattened mounds, without any fibrous or striated appearance.

**CAPILLATUS:** When the upper region is cirrus-like and fibrous or striated, often in the shape of an anvil, plume or a disorderly mass of white hair.

CUMULONIMBUS VARIETIES:

COMMERCEABLE VARIETIES:  
There are no official varieties.



**NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH...**

**NIMBOSTRATUS:** which is a dark, ragged precipitating layer, covering the sky. It can look similar to a Cumulonimbus that is directly over head (and also appears to cover much of the sky) but the precipitation will tend to be more steady and more persistent than the short heavy showers of the Cumulonimbus. If thunder, lightning or hail is present, then the cloud is a Cumulonimbus.

**CUMULUS CONGESTUS:** from which a Cumulonimbus often develops. Seen from a distance, the cloud is said to have changed into a Cumulonimbus when parts of its upper region begin to lose their sharp edges, due to the droplets freezing into ice crystals. Thunder, lightning or hail will also identify the Cumulonimbus.

\* These approximate altitudes (above the surface) are for mid-latitude regions.

Top left: Bob Jagendorf (member 1490). Top right: Miller Davis (member 1633)  
Bottom: Reed Connor (member 1231)

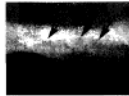
**S**tratus are grey layers or patches of cloud, with very diffuse edges. They are the lowest-forming of all the cloud genera, sometimes appearing at ground level, when they are called fog or mist.

**WHERE THEY FORM:**  
Worldwide. Most commonly around  
coasts and mountains.

**PRECIPITATION (REACHING GROUND):**  
No more than occasional drizzle, snow  
or snow grains.



Stratus nebulosus translucidus



Stratus fractus

**NOT TO BE  
CONFUSED WITH...**

**CIRROSTRATUS:** which is a high layer cloud that can look similar to a very thin Stratus. Being made of ice, however, it has a whiter tone.

**ALTOSTRATUS:** which is a mid-level layer cloud, often consisting of droplets, like Stratus. Through a layer of Stratus, the outline of the Sun (when it is discernible) is less diffuse, compared with the 'ground-glass' appearance of the Altostratus.

**NIMBOSTRATUS:** which is a thick, dark layer of precipitating cloud that might be confused with a thick Stratus. But this has a less ragged base than the Nimbostratus and produces lighter precipitation.

STRATUS SPECIES:

**NEBULOSUS:** By far the most common, when it is in a grey, generally featureless layer.

**FRACTUS:** When it is in separate, ragged shreds of grey cloud. This can appear in the region below precipitating clouds, when it is called 'pannus'. Though not particularly thick, these shreds can look quite dark against the base of the cloud above.

## STRATUS VARIETIES:

**OPACUS:** When the layer is thick enough to completely mask the sun or moon.

**TRANSLUCIDUS:** When it is thin enough to show the outline of the sun or moon.

**UNDULATUS:** A rare variety, in which the layer has wave-like undulations to its surface. The surface of Stratus is rarely distinct enough for this to be observed.

\* These approximate altitudes (above the surface) are for mid-latitude regions.

Left: Rob Legendoff (member 14805)

P  
fa

a) W  
b) C  
c) t  
d) S

Get it fast  
N

ir  
A  
b  
fl  
n  
a)

C  
n  
o  
ir  
h  
a  
a  
C

n  
t  
w

## HOW TO SPOT STRATOCUMULUS CLOUDS

Stratocumulus are low layers or patches of cloud, with well-defined bases. They are usually composed of clumps or rolls, and often show strong variations in tone - from bright white to dark grey. Their cloud elements may be joined into continuous, unbroken layers or have gaps between them.

**TYPICAL ALTITUDES\*:**  
2,000-6,500ft  
**WHERE THEY FORM:**  
Worldwide - it's a very common cloud.  
**PRECIPITATION (REACHING GROUND):**  
Occasionally light rain, snow or snow pellets.



Stratocumulus stratoformis opacus...



...and perlucidus

### STRATOCUMULUS SPECIES:

**STRATIFORMIS:** The most common, when the clumps or rolls extend over a large area. A 'roll cloud' is a particular formation, in the shape of a large, individual tube of cloud.

**LENTICULARIS:** When one or more mass of cloud is in a smooth, solid-looking almond or lens shape.

**CASTELLANUS:** When the elements have crenellated tops.

### STRATOCUMULUS VARIETIES:

**OPACUS:** When the layer is thick enough to completely mask the sun or moon.

**TRANSLUCIDUS:** When it is thin enough to show the outline of the sun or moon.

**PERLUCIDUS:** When there are gaps between the cloud elements.

**DUPLICATUS:** When there are layers at different altitudes, sometimes partly merged.

**UNDULATUS:** When the elements are arranged in nearly parallel lines.

**RADIATUS:** When lines of closely bunched elements appear to converge towards the horizon.

**LACUNOSUS:** When the layer shows large net-like holes fringed with cloud.

### NOT TO BE

**CONFUSED WITH:-**  
**CUMULUS:** which is also clumpy, well defined, and forms at similar altitudes. The elements of Stratocumulus tend to be closer together and to have flatter tops.

**ALTOCUMULUS:** which is a mid-level layer of cloudiness. These appear smaller than the Stratocumulus elements, which - looking above 30° from the horizon - appear larger than the width of three fingers, held at arm's length.

**STRATUS:** which is a low, indistinct layer, with much less variation in tone and less definition than Stratocumulus.

\* These approximate altitudes (above the surface) are for mid-latitude regions.

on  
to  
aw  
po  
rar  
fu  
ab  
es  
th

ck  
es  
N  
fe  
co  
so

pe  
th  
dr  
wl  
wo  
G  
A

ct  
uj

S  
b  
cl  
au  
g  
it  
te

## HOW TO SPOT ALTOCUMULUS CLOUDS

**A**ltocumulus are mid-level layers or patches of cloudlets, in the shape of rounded clumps, rolls or almonds/lenses. These are white or grey, and the sides away from the Sun are shaded. Altocumulus are usually composed of droplets, but may also contain ice crystals.

**TYPICAL ALTITUDES\*:**  
6,500–18,000ft  
**WHERE THEY FORM:**  
Worldwide.  
**PRECIPITATION  
(REACHING GROUND):**  
Very occasionally causes light rain.

### ALTOCUMULUS SPECIES:

**STRATIFORMIS:** Most common, when the cloudlets extend over a large area.

**LENTICULARIS:** When it is in the form of one or more individual almond- or lens-shaped masses that appear dense, with pronounced shading.

**CASTELLANUS:** When the cloudlets have crenellated tops.

**FLOCCUS:** When the cloudlets are Cumulus-like tufts, with ragged bases, often with fibrous trails (virga) of ice crystals falling below.



Altocumulus stratiformis undulatus



Altocumulus lenticularis



Altocumulus floccus

### ALTOCUMULUS VARIETIES:

**OPACUS:** When the layer is thick enough to completely mask the sun or moon.

**TRANSLUCIDUS:** When it is thin enough to show the outline of the sun or moon.

**PERLUCIDUS:** When there are gaps between the cloudlets.

**DUPLICATUS:** When there are layers at different altitudes, sometimes partly merged.

**UNDULATUS:** When the cloudlets are arranged in nearly parallel lines.

**RADIATUS:** When long lines of them appear to converge towards the horizon.

**LACUNOSUS:** When the layer shows net-like holes fringed with cloud.

### NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH...

**CIRROCUMULUS:** which is a higher layer of cloudlets, that appear like little grains of salt. Looking above 30° from the horizon, the larger Altocumulus cloudlets generally appear the width of between one and three fingers, held at arm's length. Also, these exhibit shading, which those of Cirrocumulus don't.

**CIRRUS:** which is a high cloud, whose streaks of falling ice crystals can resemble Altocumulus cloudlets showing virga, but do not have their dense-looking heads.

\* These approximate altitudes (above the surface) are for mid-latitude regions.

Top: Mike Cook (November 1999) Bottom left: Mike Cook (November 1999) Bottom right: Tony Hurren (November 1999)

la  
w  
b  
  
c  
d  
t  
n  
o  
f  
h  
t

C  
r  
v  
c  
c  
t  
i  
f  
l  
  
v  
c



## HOW TO SPOT ALTOSTRATUS CLOUDS

**A**ltostratus are mid-level layers of grey cloud, which are either featureless or fibrous in appearance, and typically extend over an area of several thousand square miles. Usually composed of both water droplets and ice crystals, they are often thin enough in parts to reveal the position of the sun, which appears as if through ground glass. Altostratus can cause a white or (when very thin) coloured 'corona' (disc of light) around the sun or moon.

**TYPICAL ALTITUDES\*:**  
6,500-23,000ft

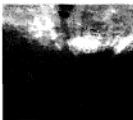
**WHERE THEY FORM:**  
Worldwide. More common in the middle latitudes.

**PRECIPITATION (REACHING GROUND):** Usually not, but occasionally light rain or snow.

**ALTOSTRATUS SPECIES:**  
There are no species, as the cloud's appearance is so uniform.



*Altostratus translucidus*



*Altostratus radiatus*

### ALTOSTRATUS VARIETIES:

**OPACUS:** When the cloud layer is generally thick enough to mask the position of the sun or moon.

**TRANSLUCIDUS:** When it is generally thin enough to show the position of the sun or moon.

**DUPPLICATUS:** When there is more than one layer at different altitudes, these often being partly merged. This is generally only visible when, by the light of a low sun, the higher layer is lit and the lower is in shadow, or when shearing winds cause the striations of the layers to differ.

**UNDULATUS:** When the layer shows largely parallel undulations.

**RADIATUS:** When lengthy undulations appear to converge toward the horizon.

### NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH...

**CIRROSTRATUS:** which is a higher layer of ice crystals that looks like a thin, milky veil across the sky, and often thickens and lowers to develop into Altostratus. The Altostratus will tend to be more opaque, making the sunlight too diffuse for objects to cast shadows, as they do below Cirrostratus. While coloured or white discs of light, called coronae, can appear around the sun/moon through Altostratus, this cloud will not cause the 'halo' phenomena of the Cirrostratus.

**NIMBOSTRATUS:** which is a thick, dark layer of precipitating cloud that often develops out of an Altostratus. Generally darker, it produces considerably heavier rain or snow.

\* These approximate altitudes (above the surface) are for mid-latitude regions.

Left: Steve Zellwisk (number 1611). Right: Alamy Studios (number 1879)

## HOW TO SPOT NIMBOSTRATUS CLOUDS

**N**imbostratus are thick, grey, featureless layers of cloud that cause prolonged, continuous, often heavy, rain, snow or ice pellets. They tend to have very diffuse bases, as a result of all the falling precipitation. Nimbostratus are the deepest of all the layer clouds – sometimes extending from 2,000ft up to around 18,000ft – and generally extend over many thousand square miles. As with other precipitating clouds, the falling precipitation can cause Stratus fractus to form in the air below Nimbostratus clouds. These are known as 'pannus' and appear as shreds of cloud, looking darker than the underside of the Nimbostratus. When these join together, they tend to lower the bases of Nimbostratus clouds even further. They are invariably thick enough to completely hide the sun or moon.

**NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH...**  
**ALTOSTRATUS:** which is a thinner – though also indistinct – layer of cloud. Nimbostratus is always darker than it and, by definition, produces precipitation. Altostratus only does sometimes, and this will generally be light. Whilst the position of

**TYPICAL ALTITUDES\*:**  
2,000–18,000ft  
**WHERE THEY FORM:**  
Worldwide. More common in middle latitudes.  
**PRECIPITATION (REACHING GROUND):** Causes moderate to heavy rain or snow (steady and prolonged).

**NIMBOSTRATUS SPECIES:**  
There are no species, as the cloud's appearance is so uniform.

**NIMBOSTRATUS VARIETIES:**  
There are no varieties, as the cloud's appearance is so uniform.

the sun can generally be determined through at least part of a layer of Altostratus, it will never be so through a Nimbostratus.

**CUMULONIMBUS:** which, when observed from directly below, can also appear as a very dark layer, covering the whole sky. The precipitation falling from a Nimbostratus will not generally be as heavy and will be more prolonged and continuous, compared with the sudden showers of the Cumulonimbus. Nor will the Nimbostratus produce its hail, thunder or lightning.



Nimbostratus – never a pretty sight.

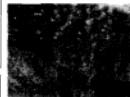
\* These approximate altitudes (above the surface) are for mid-latitude regions.

David Hunt (number 1137)

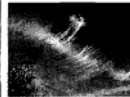
# HOW TO SPOT CIRRUS CLOUDS

Cirrus are the highest of the ten main cloud types. In the form of delicate, white streaks, patches or bands of falling ice crystals, they are detached from each other, and have fibrous or silky appearances. Cirrus rarely appear very thick. They are often seen with the other high clouds, Cirrostratus and Cirrocumulus and, like them, can show 'halo phenomena' around the sun or moon.

**TYPICAL ALTITUDES\*:**  
16,500-45,000ft  
**WHERE THEY FORM:**  
Worldwide.  
**PRECIPITATION (REACHING GROUND):** None.



Cirrus floccus



Cirrus vertebratus



Cirrus uncinus

## **CIRRUS SPECIES:**

**FIBRATUS:** When it is in the form of straight or curved filaments that are mostly distinct from each other and do not terminate in hooks or clumps.

**UNCINUS:** When its 'fallstreaks' are the shape of hooks or commas.

**SPISSATUS:** The thickest Cirrus - when it is in patches that appear grey in front of the sun - which tends to originate from the anvil of a Cumulonimbus.

**CASTELLANUS:** When it is in the form of small distinct clumps with crenellated tops.

**FLOCCUS:** When it is in the form of independent small round tufts, which often show trails of ice crystals falling from them.

## **NOT TO BE**

**CONFUSED WITH...**

**CIRROSTRATUS:** which looks like a thin, milky smooth or fibrous veil across the sky. Cirrus, by contrast, is in separated streaks, fibres or patches.

**CIRROCUMULUS:** which is a high layer of cloudlets, like grains of salt. Cirrus does not show this finely dappled texture.

## **CIRRUS VARIETIES:**

**INTORTUS:** When the fallstreaks are irregular and tangled.

**RADIATUS:** When the filaments are in parallel bands, usually aligned to the wind at high altitude, which converge towards the horizon, due to perspective.

**VERTICILLATUS:** When the filaments look like a fish skeleton.

**DUPLICATUS:** When the filaments, streaks or hooks are arranged at more than one altitude, which can be apparent when the winds cause them to point in different directions.

\* These approximate altitudes (above the surface) are for mid-latitude regions.

Left: Mid-Atlantic Sea, November 1978. Top right: Graham Tibben (November 1972). Bottom right: Lord King (November 1972).

re  
wi  
th  
  
cl-  
'p  
N  
cr  
sp  
cl  
  
th  
di  
of  
Fc  
pl  
  
cl-  
re  
di  
th  
co  
  
tr-  
to  
va  
th  
od

## HOW TO SPOT CIRROCUMULUS CLOUDS

**C**irrocumulus are high patches of cloud or layers of tiny cloudlets that appear as white grains. These show no shading, even on the sides away from the sun. These cloudlets are generally regularly spaced, and often arranged in ripples, known as the undulatus variety.

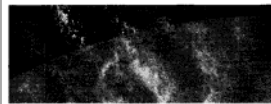
**TYPICAL ALTITUDES\*:**  
16,500–45,000ft  
**WHERE THEY FORM:**  
Worldwide.  
**PRECIPITATION  
(REACHING GROUND):**  
None.

### CIRROCUMULUS SPECIES:

**STRATIFORMIS:** When it is in an extensive layer, rather than just a patch. A less common species than for other genera.  
**LENTICULARIS:** When it is in the form of one or more independent, well-defined, almond- or lens-shaped masses, which have smooth surfaces and are much larger than the grain-like cloudlets of the other species.  
**CASTELLANUS:** When, on careful inspection, its cloudlets have crenellated tops.  
**FLOCCUS:** When, on careful inspection, its cloudlets are Cumulus-like, with ragged bases.



*Cirrocumulus stratiformis*



*Cirrocumulus lacunosus undulatus*

### CIRROCUMULUS VARIETIES:

**UNDULATUS:** When its cloudlets are in a wave-like arrangement of ripples or broad undulations (or both at the same time).  
**LACUNOSUS:** When the layer has holes fringed with cloud, like a net or honeycomb.

### NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH...

**CIRRUS AND CIRROSTRATUS:** which are streaks and smooth/fibrous layers of high cloud. Cirrocumulus layers, by contrast, are subdivided into many grain-like cloudlets.

**ALTOCUMULUS:** which is a mid-level layer of larger cloudlets. Looking above 30° from the horizon, the smaller Cirrocumulus cloudlets generally appear less than the width of one finger, held at arm's length.

\* These approximate altitudes (above the surface) are for mid-latitude regions.

Top: Steve A. Korte (courtesy: NASA)

C  
Inde  
a tra  
the :  
way  
appe  
reco,  
delig  
T  
level  
is no  
how  
sky  
varit  
strat  
a ter  
that  
is pa  
shap

THI  
high  
as t  
rese:  
app  
V  
dete  
ther  
tem,  
depi  
form  
imp  
-  
surfi  
the

HOW TO SPOT

CIRROSTRATUS CLOUDS


Cirrostratus are largely transparent, milky veils of high cloud that look either smooth or fibrous. They tend to cover large areas of the sky, extending over many thousands of square miles, but are often so subtle as to be missed. They do, however, sometimes produce the white or coloured rings, spots or arcs of light around the sun or moon that are known as 'halo phenomena'.

**TYPICAL ALTITUDES\*:**  
16,500-30,000ft


**WHERE THEY FORM:**  
Worldwide.

**PRECIPITATION:**  
None.

**HALO PHENOMENA:**



Cirrostratus causing a '22° Halo' around the moon



Cirrostratus fibratus causing a 'sun-dog' at the same elevation as the sun

**CIRROSTRATUS SPECIES:**

**FIBRATUS:** When the cloud veil has a fine fibrous or striated appearance.

**NEBULOSUS:** When it shows no variation in tone.

**CIRROSTRATUS VARIETIES:**

**UNDULATUS:** When the veil has a wave-like appearance.

**DUPLICATUS:** When there is more than one layer, at different altitudes. This is generally only visible when, by the light of a low sun, the higher layer is lit up when the lower is in shadow, or when shearing winds cause the striations of each layer to differ.

**NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH...**

**ALTOSTRATUS:** which is a mid-level, generally thicker, layer cloud. Besides being thinner, the ice crystals of the Cirrostratus can sometimes produce halo phenomena around the sun or moon. These are far less common in Altostratus, which will generally only produce a corona (a white or coloured disc of light).

**CIRBUS OR CIRROCUMULUS:** which are streaks and grained/rippled layers of high cloud. Cirrostratus, which often appears in conjunction with them, is a more continuous and diffuse layer.

\* These approximate altitudes (above the surface) are for mid-latitude regions.

Top right: The Zenith Institute / NASA

Consta  
Rome  
a cross  
eris' -  
Th:  
Const:  
of that  
safegu:  
instruc  
army r  
as the  
Th  
associ:  
it later  
as a di  
centre  
Eu  
tally v  
his bo  
it witl  
comp  
Va  
when  
ice cr  
know  
accou  
comm  
I s  
has r  
shape

THE  
whicl  
genet  
form: