

Tricks to predicting the weather

By Graham Averill, Outside

I was stumbling around in the middle of the night, lost in a wicked snowstorm on the Appalachian Trail and all I could see with my headlamp was a wall of white. I knew an A.T. shelter was a mile through the woods and the interstate was five miles in the other direction, but I was blinded by the snow. I pictured myself hiking in circles, eventually curling up in a ball like the man from the famous Jack London story.

My death would be humiliating, considering I was only seven miles from the nearest Waffle House. I never should've believed the farmer and his bean jar, I thought.

For as long as people have wondered if they should bring an umbrella, there have been folksy ways of predicting the weather. That famous ground hog, the stripes on a woolly worm, the shape of persimmon seeds—all of that folklore we have used to forecast long-term weather patterns. Some farmers insist the number of fogs in August foretell the number of snows in winter. They put beans in a jar for every fog they count, then go on the local news and say it's going to be a dry winter.

Take it from me: You should not make backpacking plans based on the number of beans in a farmer's jar.

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