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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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RING AROUND THE MOON

"The bigger the ring, the nearer the wet."

This old saying, which relates to the common halo around the moon (not to be confounded with the smaller and much more distinctly colored corona, seen in fleecy clouds) seems, at first sight, inconsistent with the fact that the angular size of this ring is invariable, the radius being always 22 degrees. But, says Dr. Humphreys in his book "Weather Proverbs":

"When the actual distance to a halo is less than it seems to be, as often happens when the clouds are low, it appears to be unusually large; and, conversely, when the clouds are very high a halo in them, because the distance to it commonly is underestimated, impresses one as being correspondingly small.

"Now, the higher the clouds the swifter the winds that carry them along and the farther removed they become from the parent storm. Hence, a halo that appears small is due to clouds that probably are far removed from the storm that produced them, while a halo that seems large, since it is caused by relatively low and, therefore, slow-moving clouds, usually indicates that the storm, if there be one, is comparatively near."

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