

Explanation of a Weather Saying

*"Mares' tails and mackerel scales
make tall ships take in their sails."*

The mackerel sky is composed of cirrus and cirrocumulus clouds (which resemble scale patterns on a mackerel's back). The mare's tails refer to trails of ice crystals blown in streaks from cirrus clouds.

A mackerel sky often precedes an approaching warm front, and can indicate strong winds aloft. This front will eventually bring veering winds (changing from northeast and east over to southwest and west) and precipitation. Therefore, if there is precipitation and/or storms moving in, ships will want bring in their sails for safety. Also, strong winds require less sail for navigation in a rough sea.