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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Er. Charles F. Brooks,
Secretary, American Meteorological Society,
Discusses:

FUR AND FEATHER FALLACIES

Every fall the word goes about that the wild animals and birds have extraordinarily ^{ily} thick fur or feathers, a "certain sign" that the winter will be early and severe, "one of the worst in years"; or else that beast and fowl have but meager winter coats and therefore the winter will be an open one. Almost always the prophesy is prefaced by "They say". The old time hunter who chances to shoot a full feathered grouse or quail sends forth the cry of terrible cold ahead, while as likely as not on the same day another old hunter will kill some creature less sumptuously clad, and declare that a "green Christmas" may be expected.

Such portents as an indication of forecasting ability in animals have been wholly discredited by scientific investigation and by the observations of intelligent people generally. Neither animals nor birds possess an instinct which foretells the weather of a season yet to come. It is the food supply and other conditions of the season past and present which determine the quality of their winter overcoats, and not the season which is to come. Only in so far as a cold winter may follow a cool fall, or a mild winter a warm autumn can features dependent on existing conditions give any indication of the future weather. Since there is a small tendency for a cool season to be followed by one of like character, the fur and feather indications are not always wholly fallacious.

(Tomorrow: Winter's First Snow, the Snow Squall)

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