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A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Dr. Charles F. Brooks,
of Clark University,
says:

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FEBRUARY HAS MOST SNOW

February throughout the eastern United States is the most favorable month for snowstorms. Looking at maps of snowfall distribution by months one sees that, notwithstanding its 10 per cent. handicap in number of days, the average snowfall of February exceeds that of January over most of the eastern United States, the only portion of North America for which monthly snowfall maps are available.

Why should not the heaviest snowfall occur in January, commonly our coldest month? It is true that the land is coldest in January, but the oceans and the Great Lakes do not cool so quickly, and so do not reach their minimum temperatures till February or even March. A wind from which heavy snow is being precipitated must bring its moisture from some large body of water. In early winter, such winds may be too much warmed by the water to produce snow, and will give rain instead. Heavy snow usually is caused by a well developed, cold low moving eastward, accompanied by a very cold, well marked high to the north. The snow falls principally with or, rather, through the northeast surface wind between the high and the low. In New England, such a northeast wind off the ocean, though perhaps still generally too warm for snow in January, is colder in February and may favor heavy snowfall. By March, the ocean has reached its lowest temperature but the land is becoming distinctly warmer, hence conditions are less favorable for snow than in February. In the case of the British Isles where the ocean temperature is the principal control, the heaviest snowfall may be delayed as late as March or April.

(Tomorrow: Memorable Snowstorms)

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