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A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Dr. Charles F. Brooks,
of Clark University,
tells

WHERE SNOW BANKS LINGER LONGEST

Snow banks linger longest on north slopes or north sides of buildings, and other places protected alike from sun and warm winds. A shady spot, for instance, under heavy evergreen foliage favors their survival. Shelter from warm winds is also desirable, and a small depression helps to collect a drift of snow and then to maintain a cold pocket of air over it. At times the snow bank is not evaporating, but is condensing moisture out of the air onto its cold surface. Look at a leaf lying on a melting snow drift. You will often see little beads of dew on it. A snow bank further protects itself by the cushion of cool air which forms directly over it. Even with a moderate wind the air over the snow will be cooler. In mid-April this year one of the last snow banks of winter on the last day of its existence was still able to make its presence felt. The snow bank was about 3 feet long by 4 feet wide, varying in depth from 1/2 an inch to 3 inches. A brisk wind was blowing, though the flow of air was but moderate over the drift. The general air temperature was 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Half an inch from the snow surface, on the lee side, however, the air temperature was only 54 degrees Fahrenheit. The temperature over the snow would rise a little with each puff of wind, then fall slowly till the next puff perhaps only a moment or two later.

(Tomorrow: Why Fogs Are Quiet)

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