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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Dr. Charles F. Brooks
of Clark University
describes:

A SPELL OF WEATHER

What a dreary, chilly, foggy, drizzly, and rainy week the northeastern United States and southern Ontario did have. For five days from May 8 to 12, southern New England was treated to no sight of the sun, while precipitation in some form or other was practically continuous and a northeast wind of varying strength and constant temperature in the low forties held the field without an interruption. Other parts of the northeast, from the Mississippi eastward, were equally maltreated. Minnesota and Wisconsin had five days of chilly, wet weather from the 6th to the 10th, Lower Michigan and the region eastward and southeastward had four days of rainfall, but with pleasanter temperatures. The rainfall totals ranged up to several inches, the greatest amounts being in the middle Atlantic states, where floods resulted.

This spell of weather was the result of a generally stagnant area of high pressure over eastern Canada, supplying a practically inexhaustible flow of chilly air along the ground into the eastern United States. Some well-defined low pressure areas caused by the interactions of the cold air with warmer masses from the south brought heavy rains in the first part of the period, along the coast and in the central valleys. Then the coastal storm passed out to sea, leaving, however, a long, low pressure trough extending into the interior. The low at the western end of this then joined forces with a new one in the south. Moving eastward together and fed by a new supply of moisture from the Gulf region these terminated the cool rainy spell with abundant downpours.

May is a favorite time of year for such endless weather, because then the chilly northeast causes the accumulation of stagnant masses of cold air and the building of highs, while the South and Middle West are ready producers of slow-moving warm, moist air.

(Tomorrow: Why High Clouds Go East)

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