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A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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

DISTRIBUTION OF EXTREME HEAT

Those of us who live in the north probably think that in our section the thermometer never rises as high as in the Gulf States. A map of the highest temperatures observed, therefore, may prove somewhat surprising. Unlike maps of average temperatures, which show a more or less orderly increase in heat from north to south, this map of extremes shows that the interior of the continent can become by far the hottest, while the coasts and mountains remain relatively cooler. Thus, 110 degrees Fahrenheit is about the hottest ever throughout a wide area of the central plains from southern Texas to North Dakota, and eastward to Iowa and Illinois. This dry, moderately high, interior is preeminently our main large hot area, though surpassed by small lowlands such as Death Valley in arid portions of California or Arizona, where such extreme temperatures as 115 degrees or 120 degrees, and even 134 degrees have been observed. The dampness and cloudiness of the Gulf States does not permit such high temperatures, 100 degrees to 105 degrees being about the limit. But this very dampness makes the same degree of heat there much more oppressive than in drier regions. Along the Atlantic coast in general, the Lake region and southern Canada, 100 degrees is about the highest temperature one need anticipate, while for the northern Pacific coast, maxima are only 90 and 95 degrees. Ninety-five degrees is also a common upper limit in mountain regions and high plateaus.

(Tomorrow: Calm Heat Favors Thunderstorms)

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