

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WHY SO COLD?

Owing to the constantly chilling effect of the snow and ice not only on the ground but also in streams and lakes, the air in the Northeast is at this season denser on the average than to the south and west. Pressures, in consequence, average higher, giving rise to what meteorologists call the Northeastern high of spring. It has not required a magnifying glass to see this condition during recent weeks. Promising looking lows from the warm plains have approached with their complement of south winds, only to shy off to the southeast or to jump hastily over the deadening cold zone. A hopeful "rain and warmer" turns too soon to "snow and colder". The cold dense air is strongly entrenched, and yields but slowly to the overhead attacks of warmer winds or the bright March sun. The white snow turns most of the sun's rays back into space. But the flank attack is succeeding. Where the ground is bare the sun's radiation counts and slowly but surely the heat developed is eating the snow cover northward faster than occasional flings bring it southward again.

It would be unsafe to ascribe the lateness of the spring in the East simply to the accumulated snow; major atmospheric pressure conditions are involved. The great low pressure area in the Atlantic Ocean that was attended by so much disturbance from late January through February has overlapped eastern America. Here, in consequence, the prevailing cold northwesterly winds have been strengthened. Though apparently moving slowly eastward the great low has not yet relinquished its grip on us.

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