

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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OCEAN TEMPERATURES AND RAINFALL

It is easy to say that warm ocean waters favor heavy rainfall, but it is difficult to prove this true for all cases. Nobody questions that a pronounced development of "El Nino" attends a period of downpours. "El Nino" (the Child), so named because it usually comes about Christmas time, is the occasional warm current that flows southward along the coast of Peru and northern Chile, taking the place of the cold waters of the upwelling, landward border of the Humboldt Current. The last pronounced occurrence of this warm current, with its attendant, locally house-dissolving and flooding rainfall, was early in 1925. Nearly a year later, in December, 1925, heavy showers in the north made Peruvians apprehensive, but early this year the usual aridity prevailed. Possibly the same sort of warm current was responsible for such flooding rains as fell early this year in southwestern Mexico, normally dry at that time.

There is an upwelling of cold water on the landward margin of the California Current along the coast of southern California, corresponding to that occurring in the Humboldt Current. The past winter and spring, however, has been one of apparently less upwelling, for along the coast the temperatures have been much above normal. At the Scripps Institution for Oceanography the sea temperature from February 1 to April 15, 1926 averaged 62.5 degrees Fahrenheit, nearly 5 degrees above the average for the same season of the past ten years, and more than 3 degrees warmer than the highest known for this period.

Coincidentally, if not in consequence, the air temperatures nearby averaged the highest on record for the season, ~~also~~ there have been record-breaking rains, accompanying lows of unusual number and intensity.

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