

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE LAST OF THE CRICKETS

From late summer till mid-autumn the cheerful chirps of crickets have marked our moderate and warm evenings and nights. Now, with chilly nights prevailing, the cricket chorus is heard less often, and soon will be stilled. A temperature of 50 degrees Fahrenheit is about the cold limit for the chirping of the most regular and musical of our crickets. A high chirper, however, was heard at a temperature as low as 40.

On the warmest evening when observations were made the crickets were chirping about as fast as the chirps could be counted, 183 per minute at a temperature of 79. Another time the rate was 165 per minute at 78 degrees. As the temperature falls the rate regularly declines, till at 52, the lowest temperature at which chirps were counted, the rate was twice found to be 56 per minute, or less than a third as fast as on the warmest nights. The high-chirp cricket mentioned above as chirping at a temperature of 40 appeared to have difficulty, and irregularly chirped at a rate of 36 per minute.

The chirping is usually nearly in unison from a number of crickets, but some lack of unison has been found to develop when local differences in temperature within short distances occur. A difference of three degrees between a shady hollow and a warmer hillside 50 feet away, threw the chirpers out of synchronism by as much as 10 per cent.

In case you wish to use the cricket for a convenient thermometer, it is only necessary to remember a simple rule. Count the number of chirps in 14 seconds, add 40, and you'll have the temperature. On this basis, the temperature is obtained within one degree at least three times out of four, and within two degrees nine times out of ten.

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