

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Dr. Charles F. Brooks  
of Clark University

"PANAMA RAINS"

October and November are the months of heaviest rainfall in the Canal Zone. Automatic rainfall registers have been in operation scarcely 20 years at Panama stations, but already a number of tremendous downpours have been noted, including one world's record. In November, 1911, Porto Bello received 2.47 inches of rain in three minutes. Often we do not get as much rain as that in a whole month. During the hour in which this cloudburst occurred two inches more fell. In October, 1909, Cristobal recorded a rainfall of 4.90 inches within an hour, but Balboa has the record for an hour's rainfall in the Canal Zone - 5.86 inches in June, 1906. At three quarters of the stations the maximum daily falls have occurred in October or November.

It appears that these excessive rains in autumn are associated with the high ocean temperatures and the occasional invasions of cold winds in northerly from higher latitudes at this time of year. Muggy air over the sea is violently forced upward by heavier air from above, and is so rapidly cooled by the consequent expansion that much precipitation of vapor results.

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SCIENCE SERVICE,  
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Washington, D.C.