

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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CONVERSATION WITH A POLICEMAN

"Going to be good weather this week end, Professor?"

"Looks now as if it would be fair and warmer."

"Expecting a mild winter, aren't you?"

"I can't say that - don't know so far ahead."

"Don't you know anything about it? I tell you if I had my way I'd just turn that Gulf Stream right up along our shores. Then we'd have some comfortable weather. By the way, I don't understand that Gulf Stream very well: how far north does the warm water come?"

"Oh it flows northeastward not far from the coast, passing fairly close to Nantucket and heading to the Grand Banks, southeast of Newfoundland. From there it slowly spreads eastward. I guess you've read how the prevailing, warm, damp wind off it helps keep the British Isles and northwest Europe generally mild in winter. But however it may help the Britishers it seems to me that that warm stream makes our winters colder and snowier than if it weren't so close at hand, for, unlike theirs, our prevailing wind is from the cold continental interior. You know the Gulf Stream is stormy. Well, we get the winds from the northeast, north, and northwest blowing towards the storms, and the stronger those storms are the more these cold winds blow. I'm afraid your cure for our cold and snowy winter weather wouldn't work. You'd do better to cool off the Gulf Stream, then there wouldn't be so many of these heavy northeast snowstorms or cold snaps!"

"Funny how things are sometimes just opposite to what it seems they ought to be! I say 'turn on the warm water, I want to get warm,' but you tell me 'No, turn on the cool water, that'll warm you up.' This weather science looks kind of complicated!"

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