

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed September 14, 1927

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ARCTIC WEATHER

There are two widespread popular fallacies in regard to the climate and weather of the Arctic. One is that the region is subject to heavy falls of snow and the other that its weather is always and everywhere intensely cold.

The precipitation over the greater part of the Arctic - snow and rain combined - is about equivalent in depth of water to that of Arizona or New Mexico. It ranges from 10 to 15 inches a year. In other words, the climate of the Arctic is distinctly arid.

The temperature is not always low. Far from it. Listen to what Vilhjalmur Stefansson says about the climate of his happy hunting ground:

"I spent the summer of 1910 from fifty to seventy-five miles north of the Arctic Circle in Canada, northeast of Great Bear Lake, and for six weeks the temperature rose to the vicinity of 90 degrees in the shade nearly every day. Neither did it fall low at night, for in that region the sun does not set in summer and there is no respite through cooling darkness. The sun beat down on us from a cloudless sky as it continued its monotonous circling, and all of my party agreed we had never in our experience suffered as much from cold as we suffered from heat that summer.

"The distress was augmented by the unbelievable number of pests of the insect world - mosquitoes, sandflies, horseflies and so on."

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