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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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ATMOSPHERIC PRECIPITATION

Moisture that is condensed out of the atmosphere and deposited on the earth is described by meteorologists as "precipitation". It assumes a greater variety of forms than most people suppose.

The commonest liquid form is rain, and the commonest solid form, snow. Each flake of the latter consists of one or more tiny ice crystals. Hail, properly so called, falls almost exclusively in connection with thunderstorms and hence is very rare in cold weather. It consists of ice and compact snow, generally in concentric layers. Little pellets of snow, like tiny snowballs, falling chiefly in early spring and late autumn, but also in winter, sometimes mixed with ordinary snowflakes, are called "graupel" (in which the "au" is pronounced like "ow" in "growl"). This form of precipitation was formerly known as "soft hail". The term "sleet" is applied by the United States Weather Bureau to small particles of clear ice - frozen raindrops. The British apply the word "sleet" to a mixture of snow and rain. Water condensed from the air on cold surfaces at night constitutes "dew", while the little drops, resembling dewdrops, that are exuded from plants by night are known as "false dew".

Fog drifting against terrestrial objects in cold weather sometimes leaves a deposit of ice, called "rime". The smooth icy deposit due to rain freezing as it falls - often very destructive to trees, wires, etc., - is called "glaze" by the Weather Bureau, while the American public commonly describes it as "sleet", and in England (where it is rare) it is called "glazed frost". The occurrence of glaze on an extensive scale constitutes an "ice storm".

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