

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE FLYING WEATHER OBSERVER

The use of aeroplanes for taking meteorological observations at moderately high levels above the earth had become a routine practice in Holland before the close of the World War. It was also utilized during and after the war by British military meteorologists, who used the data thus obtained in forecasting. At the present time there are several places in Europe where such observations are taken regularly. In the United States aeroplane observations were first made by the Signal Corps in cooperation with the Weather Bureau at the Aberdeen Proving Ground in 1918. Air density at different heights was computed from the records of pressure and temperature and used in connection with bombing tests. In recent years regular "weather hops", as meteorological flights are called by the airmen, have been made at some of the U.S. Naval air stations and elsewhere.

As compared with similar observations obtained by means of kites, the use of the aeroplane offers certain advantages. Kites cannot be used in calms or very light winds, nor can they be used in districts where there are numerous houses and other structures. Moreover, the operation of raising and hauling down a kite takes so much time that the results of the observations cannot be placed promptly at the disposal of the forecaster. The aeroplane method is free from these defects. A flight by plane can easily be completed in from a quarter to half an hour, and in addition to the automatic record, corresponding to that obtained with a kite, information can be secured concerning the location, height and extent of clouds and fog concerning weather conditions in general.

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