

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
March 28, 1930

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed March 21, 1930

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

THE BEGINNING OF SPRING

In Germany the coming of spring was once popularly identified with the arrival of the first stork, or, in some districts, the first swallow. Whichever of these birds was regarded as the authentic harbinger of the vernal season was eagerly awaited, as winter drew to a close, and in many places a man was posted on a tower to watch for its approach. When he sighted it, he blew a trumpet. Whereupon the community rejoiced and the watchman quaffed a fitting reward at the rathskeller.

Nowadays the matter is not so simple, in Germany or elsewhere, because there are several kinds of spring to choose from. According to the New English Dictionary, spring is "the first season of the year, or that between winter and summer, reckoned astronomically from the vernal equinox to the summer solstice; in popular use in Great Britain comprising the months of February, March and April; in the United States, March, April and May." Here we have three distinct and mutually overlapping "springs" recognized by the leading lexicon of the English-speaking world. One begins February 1, one March 1, and one March 21 -- a total range of seven weeks!

Lastly, the phenologists, who measure the progress of the seasons biologically, sometimes describe as the "beginning of spring" the average of the blossoming dates of several common spring-flowering plants, and this varies from one locality to another.

{All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.}

SCIENCE SERVICE
21st and B Sts.,
Washington, D. C.