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May 16, 1930.

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed May 9, 1930.

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

RAIN BIRDS

Birds of many species are supposed to foretell rain by their cries and there are numerous proverbs and old sayings on the subject; e.g.,

"When the peacock loudly bawls
Soon we'll have both rain and squalls."

Guinea fowls are said to squawk more than usual before rain. The parrot is another "rain bird"; hence Shakespeare's "clamorous as a parrot against rain." The green woodpecker's cry is supposed to portend rain, whence the bird is called the "rain fowl" in some parts of England. In Scotland and the north of England the plaintive note of the chaffinch is considered a sign of rain. When boys hear it they imitate it and then refer rhymingly to the expected consequence -- "Weet! Weet! Dreepl! Dreepl!" Cuckoos were reputed to foretell rain as far back as the time of Hesiod. Some of our so-called "rain crows" in America are cuckoos; this name being borne especially by the yellow-billed cuckoo. The black anis of Mexico and southward are also known as rain crows. The rain bird of India is a quail.

That all these birds, like animals of many other kinds, grow excited and noisy during the approach of rainy or stormy weather is probably true, but the fact that their cries are so familiar as weather prognostics is due in part to the increased audibility of all sounds at such times. Locomotive whistles and automobile horns do not grow more vociferous before a shower, but their sounds are then more noticeable than usual, because the cloudiness and high humidity of the air preceding the storm are conducive to the transmission of sound.

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