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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

THUNDER BIRD AND LIGHTNING SNAKE

The myth of the thunder bird has prevailed in various forms among the North American Indians. On the north Pacific coast the bird was supposed to be catching whales during a thunderstorm and whales were said to have been seen dropped into trees with the marks of talons on them. There are, however, various versions of the myth in that region. Among the Nootka the thunder bird is associated with the lightning snake, worn like a sash around its body and cast down as a streak of lightning, killing the whale.

James G. Swan, writing of the Indians of Cape Flattery, says that among the tribes on that part of the coast the thunder bird is supposed to be a gigantic Indian, variously known as Ka-kaitch, Thlu-kluts and Tu-tutsh.

"This giant," he says, "lives on the highest mountains and his food consists of whales. When he is in want of food he puts on a garment consisting of a bird's head, a pair of immense wings and a feather covering for his body. Around his waist he ties the ha-hek-to-ek, or lightning fish, which bears some faint resemblance to the sea horse (Hippocampus). This animal has a head as sharp as a knife and a red tongue, which makes the fire. The Thlu-kluts, having arrayed himself, spreads his wings and sails over the ocean till he sees a whale. This he kills by darting the ha-hek-to-ek down into its body, which he then seizes in his powerful claws and carries away into the mountains to eat at his leisure."

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