

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
November 10, 1930.

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed November 3, 1930.

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FOOLING THE WHITE ANT

How the African natives dwelling on the southwest shore of Victoria Nyanza produce imitation weather in order to make white ants, or termites, swarm out of season is told by R.A.J. Maguire in a recent number of the English journal "Discovery."

The purpose of this trick is to secure a supply of the ants for food, as they are a highly prized item of the native bill-of-fare. Under natural conditions the insects swarm, in the region mentioned, at the beginning of the rainy season, the event evidently being stimulated by atmospheric influences. Hence when ants are wanted for food in the dry season a shelter of leaves is built over a termite mound so that the place is in a subdued light, suggesting an overcast sky; sticks are beaten to suggest the patter of rain and perhaps thunder; while water is sprinkled at intervals over the nest. The fertile male and female insects soon begin to appear above ground ready for swarming, but before they can take flight on their frail wings they fall by the thousands into a trench prepared for them and are thus caught.

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