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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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QUESTIONS ABOUT THE AURORA

Though all of the many accurate measurements of the aurora, made by photographic methods, indicate that this beautiful phenomenon is confined to very high levels of the atmosphere, descriptions of auroral displays extending nearly or quite down to the earth's surface multiply from year to year and many of these come from intelligent and painstaking observers. So it is with the question of auroral sounds. The bulk of scientific opinion regards the noises occasionally reported in connection with such displays as purely subjective, but many conscientious observers insist to the contrary.

Recently James Halvor Johnson, who states that he has seen low-level auroras and has heard the auroral sounds in Alaska, published in all the principal newspapers of that territory and the British Yukon Territory an appeal for reports of observations bearing on the two questions at issue. The results of the inquiry are embodied in a pamphlet, which furnishes an impressive mass of evidence in behalf of Mr. Johnson's side of the questions. Letters from professional men, government officials, school-teachers, prospectors, etc., contain circumstantial descriptions of displays seen against some feature of the landscape as a background, or, in some cases, actually enveloping the observer. Equally numerous are the reports of auroral noises, described as "swishing," "crackling," "rustling," etc.

It appears to be the general opinion among well-educated residents of Alaska and the Yukon that, though low-level and audible auroral displays are uncommon, they do sometimes occur.

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