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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

BENEFICENT FOGS

Fog is commonly regarded as a nuisance, but it has some beneficial effects that deserve more attention than they have hitherto received. During the almost rainless summers of southern California fog prevents an excessive aridity that would ruin vegetation. As much as 0.05 inch of water -- equivalent to a moderate shower of rain -- has been deposited from a California fog in a single night.

On the coast of Peru, where the rainfall is negligible, plants grow luxuriantly during several months of the year, moistened only by the "garua," the celebrated drizzly fog of that region. A few years ago a wet fog, rolling in from the Pacific, rendered a unique service by putting out a fierce forest fire that had been burning for days near Port Angeles, Washington.

In all such cases the moisture from a drifting fog is caught by trees and bushes and then shed upon the ground. The process is called "fog-drip."

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21st and B Sts.
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