

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 21, 1931

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A SOUTH ATLANTIC "DEW POND"

A recent visitor to the island of Ascension, Captain Harry Pidgeon, tells us that at the summit of Green Mountain, in that island, there is a small artificial pond, surrounded by a bamboo grove and known to the islanders as the Dew Pond. The island lies in the trade-wind belt of the South Atlantic and its lower portion is a desert, but the mountaintop is kept green by moisture gathered from passing clouds and occasional light showers. The pond is abundantly supplied with water dripping from the surrounding vegetation, which catches it directly from the clouds. The process is, therefore, similar to that by which the well-known dew ponds on the tops of the South Downs, in southern England, are kept supplied with water in time of drought, the moisture being deposited by drifting fog from the sea. The name "dew pond" is a misnomer, but it is so old and so well established that its application to a cloud-fed pond in another part of the world is not surprising.

Prof. Cleveland Abbe, who visited Ascension in 1889, wrote that "the principal water supply for the garrison of this naval station is gathered several miles away, at the summit of Green Mountain. Almost all of this water comes from slight showers and steady dripping of trees enveloped in cloud-fog."

The island is no longer a naval station, its few inhabitants now being all connected with the Eastern Telegraph Company and the Ascension Island Guano Company. Rain drained from a cement-covered catchment area on the mountainside into reservoirs furnishes the water for the settlement below, but cattle drink at the border of the Dew Pond, just as sheep and cattle do from the ponds in the land of "Southdown" mutton.

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