

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE "FURIOUS FIFTIES," ETC.

Sailors have been familiar for generations with the "Roaring Forties" - the portion of the southern hemisphere lying between latitudes 40 and 50, where, with but little land to obstruct them, the "brave west winds" blow with boisterous strength. The strong winds of this region are, as a matter of fact, cyclonic storms and are by no means confined to westerly quadrants, though westerly directions predominate.

Only in recent times have regions still farther south acquired corresponding nicknames. In the narrative of the "Scotia" expedition, published in 1906, Dr. J. H. Harvey Pirie, writing of the oceanic area south of latitude 50, says: "If this wild waste of waters had lain on the regular track of any ships, it would have been named the 'Furious Fifties,' I should say. Compared with these latitudes the 'roaring' of the 'Forties' is as the bleat of a lamb to the melancholy howl of a hyena or the dismal wail of a lost soul."

The name "Furious Fifties" has since appeared in several other accounts of Antarctic voyages. More recently H. G. Ponting, in his reminiscences of Scott's expedition, has referred to the "Shrieking Sixties" and the "Frigid Seventies." The "Eighties," so far as I am aware, are still nicknameless.

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