

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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ICE-BLINK AND WATER SKY

Captain Scott, writing of the ice pack off Ross Sea, in the Antarctic, says: "In our passage through it we had usually an overcast sky; this affords the best condition for that noticeable phenomenon the 'ice-blink,' the name given to the white reflection thrown on the clouds by the snowy surface of the pack. The polar voyager, when cruising in an open sea, soon becomes familiar with the patchy white sky which indicates the presence of ice long before it is visible from the deck; and in like manner when forcing his way through the pack he looks eagerly for the dark sky shadows which surmount the pools of open water, by entering which he may hope to find his progress made easier." The latter appearance is called "water sky."

Outside of polar waters, the ice-blink sometimes gives notice to the mariner of a snow-covered iceberg in his vicinity. Neither ice-blink nor water sky have, apparently, ever been made the subject of scientific investigation and discussion by students of atmospheric optics, though they have been known to mankind for generations. The "Album of Photographs and Sketches" forming a volume of the reports of the "Discovery" expedition of 1901-04 includes some instructive pairs of photographs that show the striking contrast between the dazzling whiteness of the ice-blink and the inky aspect of water sky.

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