

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
December 23, 1931

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed December 16, 1931

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CRUST-HUNTING

The crusting of snow is familiar to everybody who knows snow at all, but among those who witness this phenomenon every winter there are many who do not know that the hard layer at the surface of a snowfield is utilized in some parts of the world as a means of making a livelihood. The practice known as "crust-hunting" in Canada and the northern United States is common in northern Siberia.

"In the spring," says W. G. Bogoras in the American Anthropologist, "during long, almost endless days, the upper surface of the snow thawing under the midday sun and freezing again in the night, gradually turns into a hard crust, the so-called "nast" in the local Russian dialect. This snow crust is of the highest importance for the conditions of spring hunting of the so-called meat-bringing character. Dog, man and wolf may easily run upon the surface of the snow, especially man supporting himself upon skis. But heavier wild reindeer and elk break through into the inner, soft snow, cutting their legs against the sharp edges of the broken crust, and so they become helpless against their pursuers. The Tungus and Yukaghir in the north, the Gold and the Samaghir in the Amur country, provide the better part of their food lasting for a full quarter of a year by just this spring hunting of elk and reindeer on the hard snow crust."

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