

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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CLIMATIC CYCLES

While meteorological records prove the falsity of the popular idea that marked changes of climate occur within the span of a human lifetime, these records are supposed by many authorities to show that variations of weather from year to year are not haphazard and fortuitous, but occur in a more or less rhythmical way. It is also widely held that, apart from evidence furnished by instrumental measurements of weather, all of which are of comparatively recent date, cyclical variations of climate are indicated by the older records of harvests, vintages, lake levels, ice conditions in rivers and harbors, the extension of glaciers and various historical events; likewise in the thickness of the annual rings seen in cross-sections of old trees (including fossil trees of remote antiquity), and the thickness of annual silt deposits in the former beds of ancient glacial lakes.

In fact, the total number of climatic cycles announced by different investigators, ranging in length from a few days to several centuries, runs into the hundreds; yet none of these alleged cycles are so regular and so clearly defined as to be universally recognized by climatologists. The most widely accepted is that known as the Brueckner Cycle, named for the late Professor Eduard Brueckner, who found that average conditions of temperature, rainfall and barometric pressure for large groups of stations in different parts of the world vary within comparatively narrow limits in an irregular period averaging about 35 years.

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