

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE NAMES OF WINDS

Modern science deals mainly with types of wind rather than with local examples, and for these types a few names suffice. The existing nomenclature of the winds was, however, mostly evolved before mankind knew anything about the broad features of atmospheric circulation and at a time when a wind prevalent in a particular locality was regarded as a distinct entity, deserving a name of its own. Because our forefathers failed to recognize generic similarities between certain winds in different parts of the world, we now call a cyclonic tempest of the West Indies a hurricane and its replica of the China Sea a typhoon; we describe a dynamically heated and dried wind of the Alps as a foehn and its congener of the eastern Rocky Mountain slope as a chinook; while as for the alternating day and night breezes of mountain valleys, the name of their names is legion. The total number of wind names in use throughout the world probably runs up to four or five hundred, though for purposes of scientific discussion a score or so of such names are enough.

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