

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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ANCHOR ICE

The masses of ice - known as "anchor ice" - that form at the bottoms of rivers and other bodies of water are easily detached under the effects of the sun's rays, passing through the water, and then rise immediately to the surface, often bringing up rocks and other heavy objects with them. Prof. H.T. Barnes tells us that thousands of tons of such ice are brought up from the bed of the St. Lawrence early every morning in winter. The Canadian boatmen keep off the river when the ice is rising, to escape the danger of being surrounded and caught in masses of it, and carried downstream into the rapids. P.S. Smith and J.B. Mertie, of the U.S. Geological Survey, in a report on their explorations in northwestern Alaska, describe the rising of anchor ice in the Killik River, down which they were traveling by boat at the beginning of June.

"The water," says this report, "was seen to swirl suddenly in so unusual a manner that it seemed to forebode trouble, and the party landed immediately and got the boats into a safe position. Hardly had this been done when a black tangle of willow roots and ice began to rise, and this was followed by more violent agitation of the water and a sheet of ice more than 100 feet long and several yards wide rose almost at the men's feet. For the next few minutes small pieces of ice rose or actually sprung a short distance out of the water, owing to the momentum with which they rose and the drive of the current. The surface of this anchor ice was covered with gravel and small pebbles and matted masses of vegetation."

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