

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE NAMES OF WINDS

Modern science is satisfied with a few generic wind names, of universal application. Our ancestors, however, knew nothing about the broad features of atmospheric circulation, and a wind prevalent in a particular locality was, for them, a distinct entity, deserving a name of its own. Hundreds of these names are still current in different parts of the world.

The lakes and valleys of the Alps have been extremely prolific in local wind names. "Solore," "vent du Mont Blanc," "joran," "morget," "rebat," "breva," "tivano," "ora," "sover" and "pontias" are a few of these. The winds prevailing along coasts and on the high seas are most fully recorded and described in the great collections of "pilots" issued by the hydrographic offices of the leading maritime powers. In these books one may read of the furious "williwaus" of the Straits of Magellan; the "levanter," "leveche," "gregalà," "imbat," "etesians," and other winds of the Mediterranean; the "leste" of Madeira and the Canary Islands; the "shamal," "kaus," "nashi," and "suahili" of the Persian Gulf; the "belat" of the Gulf of Aden; the "tehuantepecers" and "papagayos" of the west coast of Central America; the "kona" storms of the Hawaiian Islands; the "collas" of the Philippines -- and so on, through a formidable list.

Everybody has heard of the "mistral," the "bora," the "sizoom" (commonly misspelled "simoon"), the "sirocco," the "harmattan," the "pampero" and the "khamsin"; though the average citizen may be rather hazy as to the habits and habitats of some of these blasts.

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