

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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TULE FOG

Aviation has brought into prominence the "tule fog" that prevails in winter over certain areas of bottom-land and marsh in California, occupied by two large species of bulrush, both of which bear the name of "tule." The characteristic fog of these so-called "tule lands" is described as follows, in a recent magazine article:

"There are prolonged periods varying from days to weeks during winter when in the Great Central Valley of California the so-called tule fog covers the face of the land, and the sun is not seen. Flying is then wholly impossible in the fog-enveloped area. This radiation fog is different from ocean fog and has gained the name 'tule fog' because the fog is usually formed in the low lands of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley where the Mexican tule grows abundantly. Its depth is variable, usually being quite shallow, but at times exceeding 1,000 feet.

"As seen from an airplane, the upper surface of this fog, lying in the Valley, looks, according to Lieutenant Colonel G.C. Brant, Air Corps, Crissy Field, 'very much like a bowl of whipped cream, and of course is the most dangerous flying condition we have in California.' Statements have been made that the tule fog is never more than 30 meters in depth, but flyers who come down from the mountains into it, declare that the top surface is entered at times at altitudes of as much as 1,500 feet. The fog is ordinarily dissipated by the middle of the afternoon, but at other times is of considerable depth and remains through the day and night. At such times all air travel must be directed over the coastal route."

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