

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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Authority on Meteorology.

SOME WORLD-WIDE THUNDERSTORM STATISTICS

Many elaborate collections of thunderstorm statistics have been published for individual countries and parts of countries. On the other hand, there are vast areas of the land surface of the earth for which few records are available and data are especially scarce for the ocean. However, by piecing together all the information obtainable and resorting to plausible estimates for regions where no actual observations have been made, an English meteorologist, C.E.P. Brooks, has compiled some interesting statistics for the whole world.

According to Mr. Brooks' estimate about 16,000,000 thunderstorms occur on the globe every year, or 44,000 a day. Assuming an average duration of one hour, he concludes that, at any one moment, there are in progress about 1,800 thunderstorms in different parts of the world.

Finally, averaging certain records of the number of lightning flashes in single storms, he tells us that there are about 360,000 flashes over the whole globe every hour, or an average of 100 a second.

All such figures are the roughest sort of approximations. This is especially the case when it comes to estimating the total number of lightning flashes, since while some thunderstorms produce only a few discharges of lightning - say one to a dozen - there are others that produce thousands. In one Alpine storm an Austrian meteorologist counted 3,500 lightning flashes in an hour and three quarters.

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