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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

"RAINS" OF FISHES

Fishes are sometimes carried aloft by waterspouts or tornadoes and subsequently "rained" down, but fishes found on the ground have not necessarily fallen from the sky. Waldemar Jochelsen writes:

"The Yukaghir, living on the Siberian tundra between the Kolyma and Alaseya rivers, told me that the sky, regarded by them as a beneficent deity, to supply men with food flings fishes to the earth. When fish appear in the lakes in great numbers, the Yukaghir say that they have fallen from heaven. They know well enough that fish develop from spawning, but they say that fish originally had been and continue to be sent by the deity. When asked how they knew fish fall from the sky, the Yukaghir asserted that they often found living pike and a river species of salmonidae, called cheer, in dry places. Evidently, said the Yukaghir, it followed that these fish in falling from heaven failed to reach the water. I explain this phenomenon in the following way: The majority of polar lakes are connected by small rivulets, which the fish follow when passing from one lake to another for spawning. In the course of the passage the fish jump over obstructions formed by stones and grass hillocks. In the summer when the rivulets run completely dry in places, the migrating fish may find themselves caught on dry land."

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