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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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SIGNS OF HURRICANES

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The approach of a severe tropical cyclone is heralded by various signs in the sea and sky, familiar to everybody living in the lands where these tempests prevail. Such are a rise in the barometer preceding its steady fall, the cessation or reversal of the normal land and sea breezes on coasts, lurid sunset skies, and an increasing ocean swell.

Some alleged portents of these storms should not be taken too seriously. The credulous natives of the South Seas will tell you that hurricanes in those parts are announced weeks in advance by a twisting of the stalks of the banana and by an increase in the yield of the fruit, as if to provide for the coming scarcity incident to the destruction of the plants. West Indians expect a hurricane when red antshide themselves and "hurricane birds" (sooty terns) arrive in large numbers. It is also alleged that Chinese fishermen can foretell the coming of a typhoon from a peculiar disturbance of the water and the appearance of certain fish not seen at other times.

Fortunately these local prognostics, good, bad and indifferent, are supplemented nowadays, wherever tropical storms are a menace to human welfare, by scientific storm warnings, based on charted weather reports gathered by wire and radio from vast areas of land and sea.

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