

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
December 19, 1933

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed December 12, 1933.

CAT'S-ICE

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

How many kinds of ice are there? The proverbial "fifty-seven varieties" would be an altogether inadequate statement of their number. One that you perhaps do not know by name, though you have often seen it, is "cat's-ice," or "cat-ice."

You will find this term in Wright's huge "English Dialect Dictionary," with illustrations from several British dialects, but it is not unknown in America. It is applied to ^a thin layer of ice, with a space between it and the ground beneath. A shallow pool of water freezes at the surface and then the water below the ice soaks into the ground. A British writer, Charles Tomlinson, says of it:

"It must frequently have been observed during severe weather, in country lanes, that the ruts and footprints of animals are covered with a film of ice, which the country people name 'cat's ice,' probably from its deceitful appearance; for when the foot is set on it, it breaks through into an empty space below. Cat's ice is formed usually in early winter, when a frost succeeds a brisk shower of rain, which fills the ruts and footprints with water; and this, becoming coated with ice, the porous soil absorbs the water and leaves the ice."

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE
21st and Constitution Ave.
Washington, D.C.