

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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POLAR TWILIGHT

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Admiral Byrd and his companions at Little America (latitude 78 1/2 South) will say good-bye to the sun in a few weeks, but they will enjoy, besides a good deal of moonlight, a liberal amount of bright twilight. Even in the middle of the sunless period the twilight at noon is bright enough in that latitude to permit one to find his way about outdoors. Only within about six degrees of the pole is it ever absolutely dark at noon.

In his book "Etah and Beyond" Donald B. MacMillan emphasizes the large amount of twilight experienced in winter in a northern latitude almost the same as the southern latitude in which Byrd will winter, and in the current Journal of Geography another writer says:

"In latitudes within a few degrees of the polar circles, the twilight may be almost as bright as daylight during the middle of those days on which the sun does not rise. As no one has remained at either pole, nor in latitudes near the poles, throughout the year, statements about light conditions there are based upon theory. It is computed that the sun cannot be seen from about March 24 until about September 20 at the south pole but that there is twilight for several weeks before it becomes dark enough for the stars to be bright. A similar twilight period occurs before the sun appears at the close of the sunless period. At the north pole, a very dim twilight probably begins about the first of February and brightens gradually until the sun comes above the horizon in March. After the sun disappears in September, there is a period of diminishing twilight before the coming on of darkness. At latitude 80 degrees North, although the sun rises and sets each day from about the middle of February until the middle of April, there is twilight the entire night from the early part of March until the sun ceases to set."

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