

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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A SUNSET SPECTACLE

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The striking phenomenon of the "green flash," or "green ray," seen at sunset or sunrise when only a tiny fraction of the solar disk is above a sharply defined horizon and assumes a bright green color, has been observed under a great variety of circumstances. A recent case in which the horizon was the edge of a fog bank and the observer was more than a mile above the earth is described in the following letter from the Duchess of Bedford, published in the Times (London) of November 27, 1933:

"I was sitting in my airplane on the ground at four o'clock last evening when the sun set in rather thick fog. Noting a promise of better things in a patch of blue sky above our heads, I suggested flying up again and seeing a second sunset above the fog. We flew up to 6,000 feet, and were rewarded by a panorama of glorious coloring.

"Having reveled in the beauty of this dreamland for several minutes, we were granted, as a climax, a perfect view of the brilliant green ray. It was not momentary, but lasted quite one to two seconds. Both my pilot and I saw the green ray most distinctly, when we ourselves were in a clear atmosphere but the sun had set in a bank of fog sufficiently thick entirely to obscure the real horizon."

Presumably the reason the flash lasted somewhat longer than usual in this case was that the plane was gaining altitude during the observation.

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