

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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ACOUSTIC MYSTERIES

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A. Dauvillier, a member of the French party that recently operated the Polar Year weather station at Scoresby Sound on the east coast of Greenland, reports to the English journal Nature that in August, 1932, he and some of his companions heard four times the mysterious sound described by the late German explorer of Greenland, Prof. Alfred Wegener, as the "Dove Bay sound" ("Ton der Dove-Bai"). It was a powerful and deep musical note, coming far from the south, lasting a few seconds and resembling the roaring of a fog-horn. Wegener and five of his companions heard the sound eight times in five different neighboring places, both during the day and during the polar night. It lasted sometimes a few minutes. Wegener ascribed it to the movements of inland ice, and at Scoresby Sound it seemed to come from a part of the coast where the inland ice flows into the sea from the large glaciers. M. Dauvillier suggests that, if not caused by the detachment of icebergs, it may be something similar to the "singing sands" of deserts. There is, he says, a close analogy between the fields of powdery dry snow of the inland ice and those of desert sand.

There have been still other reports of this sound, or something akin to it. Twice during his lonely sojourn under the snow on the summit of the Greenland ice cap during the winter of 1930-31 the English explorer Courtauld heard a strange noise, of which he says: "It was a sound beginning as a distant rushing noise, which rose quickly in a crescendo to end in a crash, rather as if an avalanche had buried the house."

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