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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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TWO WINTER SOUNDS

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Two characteristic sounds of cold winter weather are the "booming" or "whooping" of lakes and the noise, like the report of a pistol, made by the bursting of trees. Dr. W.J. Humphreys has written of these sounds as follows:

"In any cold lake region a familiar winter sound is the occasional boom heard far and near as, under the strain induced by a great difference in temperature between its upper and under surfaces, and in other ways, a thick sheet of ice snaps and tears in long cracks and rifts."

"During an intensely cold wave one may hear in a forest an occasional 'pistol shot' where there is no pistol, and none to shoot it. It is only the outer shell of a tree splitting under the great strain caused by its cooling faster and therefore shrinking faster than the inner wood. This is not a frequent note in the winter's music, but it may be very impressive, or, indeed, startling, if one happens to hear it while alone in a forest on a dark night."

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