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March 7, 1935

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed Feb. 28, 1935

THUNDERBIRD MYTHS

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Authority on Meteorology

The thunderstorm is personified as a huge bird in the aboriginal mythology of both North and South America. Among the North American Indians the "thunderbird" was supposed to produce thunder by flapping its wings, and lightning by opening and shutting its eyes. Among some tribes the heavy rain accompanying the storm was explained on the supposition that the bird carries a lake of fresh water on its back. According to another view, the clouds form the bottom of a sky reservoir, and the thunderbird causes rain by breaking through them.

"Although," says Dr. J. R. Swanton, "the species of this bird is often quite indefinite, on the north Pacific coast it is conceived of as similar to if not identical with a large hawk found in the high mountains, while other people likened it to an eagle, and the Ntlakyapamuk of British Columbia thought it resembled a grouse. On the plains a thunderstorm was supposed to be due to a contest between the thunderbird and a huge rattlesnake ...

"On the north Pacific coast a thunderbird was supposed to be catching whales during a thunderstorm, and persons profess to have seen whales dropped into trees with the marks of talons on them."

In Australia a species of thickhead is called the "thunderbird" on account of its habit of beginning to sing immediately after a clap of thunder or any other sudden loud noise.

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