

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
April 4, 1935

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed March 28, 1935

INDIAN WEATHER PROPHETS

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman
Authority on Meteorology

The fallacy dies hard -- or will it ever die at all? that primitive people who spend their lives outdoors, "close to Nature," possess an uncanny skill in predicting weather, surpassing that of the professional meteorologist. The following tale from a recent newspaper is typical:

"The Huros, a strange race of Indians, live on man-made floating islands on Lake Titicaca, Peru, at an elevation of 13,000 feet. These islands are necessarily frail affairs and the ability to keep them floating largely depends on a knowledge of meteorology which has become an inherited sense with the Huros. They can tell almost to a minute when a storm lurking on the crest of the Andes will burst over the lake, and they can predict with the same certainty whether a year will be wet or dry. With this knowledge they strengthen their island homes against the coming of wet years, and with the approach of storms they anchor more firmly their fragile abode."

Doubtless these Indians can recognize the signs of a storm already brewing, but so can a mere meteorologist. Neither can tell "to the minute" when the storm will arrive, unless it is very close at hand. As to whether a coming year will be wet or dry their predictions are undoubtedly on a par with the predictions of cold or mild winters deduced, in more civilized communities, from the alleged reports of unidentified and frequently figmentary hunters and trappers concerning the thickness of the fur of wild animals in the autumn woods.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE
2101 Constitution Ave.
Washington, D.C.