

A Science Service Feature

Released on receipt
but intended for use
April 9, 1935

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed April 2, 1935

ANIMAL CLOUDS

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman
Authority on Meteorology

Discovering animal shapes in the clouds is an amusement in which most of humanity indulges at times. Celestial flocks of sheep are familiar to everybody. The pattern of the mackerel's back is a common motif of sky decoration. A certain Shakespearian courtier was able to descry a camel, a weasel and a whale all in the same cloud. Recently a well-known Japanese meteorologist, Dr. S. Fujiwhara, published in the Quarterly Journal of the Royal Meteorological Society some curious photographs of clouds simulating crabs, boars and rats. In fact, the animal kingdom is extensively represented in the scenery of the sky.

One strange sky animal that often attracts attention is the jellyfish. That is not its official name, but one needs little aid from the imagination to see in it the roundish body and long dangling tentacles of the common kinds of Medusae. Such clouds actually belong to the alto-cumulus class, and their hair-like streamers are called "virga" (plural of "virgum") in the new International Cloud Classification. These streamers may be showers or snowstorms in midair, or they may be due to the combing away of the lower part of the cloud by an air current different in direction from that in which the upper part is drifting.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

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