

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed November 23, 1935

BIG DIPPER AS A WEATHER SIGN

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman
Authority on Meteorology

One of my correspondents asks for information about beliefs connecting the Big Dipper--i.e., the most conspicuous part of the constellation Ursa Major--with the coming weather. In the last edition of Richard Inward's "Weather Lore" (London 1898), which records thousands of proverbs and popular notions relating to weather signs, there is only one mention of the belief in question. It reads:

"When the Great Bear is on this side of the North Pole, the summer is dry; if he gets on the other side, the summer is wet, especially if he be then in conjunction with Venus and Jupiter."

On which Mr. Inward properly comments: "This proverb is pure nonsense, as the Great Bear goes round the North Pole every day." Although with the constellation beyond the pole--i.e., between the latter and the horizon--one of the planets mentioned might well be in conjunction with it, the observer would need to consult astronomical tables to ascertain this fact, since the planet would be below the horizon and invisible.

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