

Weather's Influence Changes Life

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Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

The weather, be it fair or foul, fills more gaps in our conservatism than does any other topic. That this manifestation of the power of nature has ever loomed large in man's consciousness is not an accident. Climate which is the sum of weather in any locality, has many implications and these more than any other factor have shaped life's evolutionary trends.

Primitive man was at the mercy of wind and wave, of sun and shower. Gradually his successors learned to anticipate the seasons and to prepare for their demands. But this they can do only within certain limits.



Plants and our fellow animals have less choice. They can adapt their structure and their habits to meet the demands of their environment as man can.

GRANDPA AND, his cronies gathered around the old stove at "The Corners," may have been correct when they agreed "The weather-

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ain't what it used to be!"
The tall tales of the snow winters when you could cross Lake Superior on the ice and the snow drifted as high as the woodshed are now being studied by scientists. Some of us can add our own testimony.

Remember those zero winter months when we trod an endless mile and a half to country school, insulated by long underwear and grandma's hand-knit stockings, which came well up over the knees and the chilblains which followed?

However, we do not need to accept these memories, tinged as they are by time and emotion. We can call on the weather bureau which never forgets and which files the figures to document its claims.

LET'S BEGIN with Canada. In recent years sub-zero temperatures in Montreal are only half as common as they are in the 1880s and 90s. The mean temperature for March has risen nearly 4 degrees and the average snowfall has been reduced from 130 to 80 inches.

New England with its traditional cold and snow is also warming up. In the last 100 years the mean winter temperatures in Boston have risen 3 1/2 degrees with an attendant seven-day decrease in the period of snow-cover.

In our nation's capital, spring comes earlier than it did in the preceding century. During the 20 year period ending with 1929 there was a sum total of 354 days of freezing weather during March and April, but in the 20 years ending with 1953 the total was only 227.

State climatologist A. H. Eichmeier has this to say of our Michigan winters: "... are definitely getting warmer. We made a study of the 20-year period ending in 1930 as compared with a like period ending in 1950. We found that in the latter period the three months of December, January and February were an average of 1 1/2 degrees warmer than in the earlier period. During the last ten years eight Januaries have been warmer than normal. Temperatures at Lansing during January 1955 have been about 7 degrees above normal.

GEOLOGISTS BELIEVE we

may be in an interglacial warming period repeating the pattern of at least four other glacial epochs when the ice erased all life far south as the Ohio River and then retreated while plants and animals slowly reestablished themselves.

State Geologist Helen Martin says past warming periods have been associated with the increase of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere which forms a warming blanket. Sun spots and volcanic eruptions which decrease the power of the sun's rays reaching the earth are also given as possible reasons for the change.

The general northward migration of both plants and animals is in line with our warmer winters. This seems especially noticeable in the Arctic where the polar ice cap is slowly melting and where caribou and other vegetables are now growing in areas formerly bound by frozen tundra. Studies show that the blue crab and certain species of softfish have moved northward along the Atlantic seaboard a considerable distance.

Studies made by the Canadian government support the theory that birch trees in New England and eastern Canada are dying due to the warming soil and that balsam, spruce and maple may also be affected.

IN OUR OWN state the Audubon society has reports to prove that certain species of southern

birds such as the yellow-breasted chat and the mocking bird are now appearing in our range. Many migrants, including the mourning dove, the brown thrasher and the kinglet are now seen in the winter season. He who was once called the "Kentucky cardinal" might now be dubbed the "Michigan" cardinal.

In addition to the long temperature cycles to which the earth has been repeatedly subjected there are shorter cycles lasting 50 or 100 years. It is possible we may be living in an upward turn of one of these. Also, many more studies will need to be made to determine the effect of temperature upon plant and animal populations.

In the meantime we can rejoice that our coldest month is once more over and gone. March, whether it comes in like a lion or a lamb, is still a harbinger of spring. Today I heard a robin's song coming down from the old orchard on the hill.

Mrs. Harold Brown of Windermere was among the models of fashions from D. J. Healy's at the Engineering Society of Detroit Junior Wives' benefit event last Saturday.

The card party and fashion show was held in the Ruckham building ballroom in Detroit.

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MEMBERS OF THE Birmingham YMCA's Co-Ed Club were snapped by a photographer during the club's recent Valentine Box Social. The group of single young adults, 18 years old and older, meet each Wednesday night at the Y here in programs planned for social service and educational activities.

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A 1,000-foot relief sewer south and east of Haynes and Elton roads will be constructed by the Bay 11 Baker Co. of Detroit, city commissioner Frank J. Sponberg announced today. To cost \$34,708.00, Baker's contract was about four per cent over the city's estimate, but last lowest of the bids submitted.

Next low was \$35,777.44, the highest \$68,744.

Safety deadline is 1 p.m. each Tuesday.

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