



The Amateur Weather Forecaster



If you've ever said, "It looks like it's going to rain," you've practiced meteorology and, on a small scale, imitated the National Weather Service's major functions: observing, forecasting, and disseminating weather information. A number of people, however, are more than just casual observers of the passing weather scene. Many have set up their own stations and gain a great deal of personal satisfaction from recording each day's weather and trying their hand at forecasting. With some basic instructions and few simple instructions, some of which can be built at home, one can begin a fascinating hobby as an amateur weather forecaster.



Observing, recording, and forecasting are the present, and future tenses of meteorology.



Observations, taken accurately and at regular intervals, are of utmost importance to the weather forecaster. Weather changes are not usually heralded definitely by local indications for periods longer than a few hours in advance; indeed many local storms give scarcely an hour's notice of their coming.



Records kept of past weather can be a valuable tool in predicting future weather. The set of rules given later for forecasting weather from local indications is as any other set of local rules but in many areas they may not apply. To form such rules for any area, the amateur meteorologist must carefully and systematically record and correlate his own observations.



Forecasting is the real challenge of meteorology. Although there has been much exaggeration of the ability of mariners to forecast weather changes from local observations, they are somewhat more adept than people in most other occupations. (Pilots and farmers also acquire some skill at weather forecasting.) This is not because the signs are so much more pronounced over the ocean than over the land, but is primarily because the mariner for many years had no other source of information and of necessity learned to interpret their significance. On land, a heavy storm is not so often a matter of life or death as on the ocean, and consequently, while most people recognize a few signs, they rarely follow them out in a systematic manner to determine their reliability.

