

IT'S RAINING EELS:

A Compendium of Weird Weather

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May 19, 1780

DARKNESS AT NOON: A smoky blackness settled over the New England states, possibly the result of massive forest fires in Western states. It was so dark that by noon, people had to light candles and lamps to see. Even with the aid of lan-

terns, farmers could scarcely get to their barns to care for their livestock.

March 1876

JERKY FROM HEAVEN: *Scientific American* reported that many witnesses in Bath County in northeast Kentucky observed

"flakes of meat" drifting down from a clear sky. One investigator declared that some of the flakes tasted like mutton or venison. The cause: Lightning may have roasted a flock of birds.

March 1884

WIND-POWERED TRAIN: A gale-force wind carried a train of six loaded coal cars on the Burlington & Missouri Railroad some 100 miles in three hours. The railroad deployed a locomotive that finally caught the runaway cars, coupled to them and brought them to a stop.

January 28, 1887

BIGGEST SNOWFLAKES: On the ranch of Matthew Coleman in Fort Keogh, Mont., a mail carrier observed snowflakes that were "larger than milk pans," apparently measuring as much as 15 by eight inches.

May 29, 1892

EEL RAIN: An enormous number of eels fell during a rainstorm in Coalburg, Ala. Farmers quickly drove into town with carts and took the eels away to use as fertilizer for their fields. The eel deluge—similar to other such peltings—may have resulted from a waterspout's lifting and jettisoning the fishes.

May 11, 1894

TURTLE HAIL: The last turn of the century was a good time for falling meat. A large hailstone that fell during a thunderstorm near Vicksburg, Miss., encased a six-by-eight-inch gopher turtle. A waterspout may have lifted the amphibian, which subsequently became the nucleus for the formation of a hailstone.





May 27, 1896

WAKE ME WHEN IT'S OVER: A massive tornado that hit the St. Louis area picked up one sleeping resident along with his bed and mattress, carried him more than a quarter of a mile and left him unharmed—if unable to remember how he got there.

November 15, 1915

AIRMAIL: The tornado that hit Great Bend, Kan., was noted for many oddities, but perhaps greatest among them was the discovery of a canceled check from Great Bend in a cornfield 305 miles to the northeast near Palmyra, Neb.



June 22, 1918

CELESTIAL SLAUGHTER: In the Wasatch National Forest in Utah, park rangers discovered the carcasses of more than 500 sheep, evidently killed by a single stroke of lightning.

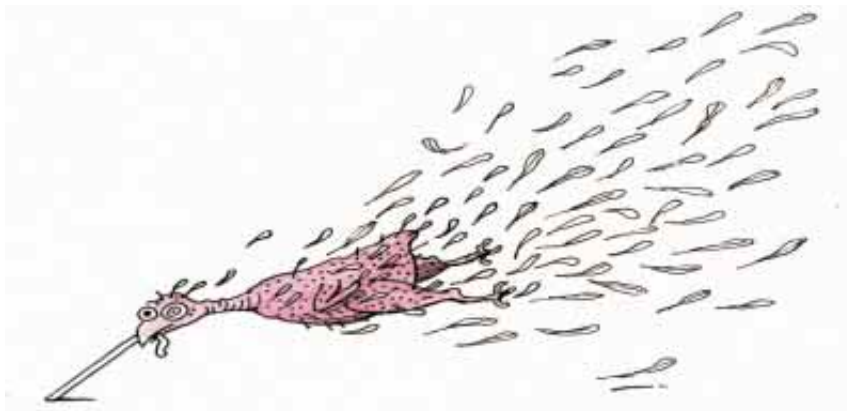
January 22, 1943

THE GREAT SOUTH DAKOTA CHINOOK: In the Black Hills of South Dakota, tempera-

tures in the small town of Spearfish fluctuated from -4 to 45 degrees Fahrenheit in two minutes because of blistering chinook winds during the morning hours. This rapid change in temperature was so pronounced that many plate-glass windows cracked simultaneously.

June 8, 1958

MORE THAN ONE WAY TO PLUCK A BIRD: A tornado tore off the feathers of a chick in Flint, Mich., and the local newspaper showed a photograph of it “pecking around a truck twisted like a steel pretzel.” The National Severe Storms Forecast Center remarked on the story: “While it is not [our] mission ... to record tornadoes which depلمed fowls, enough



events of this phenomenon have been documented over the past 140 years to warrant its acceptance.”

June 14, 1960

A NIGHT IN HELL: After a distant thunderstorm sent a blistering downburst into the town of Kopperl, Tex., the temperature apparently shot up to near 140 degrees F, roasting ears of corn on their stalks, wilting cotton plants and drying fields of grass so that they were ready for immediate baling.

November 17, 1971

ELECTRIC SANDS: At White Sands, N.M., during a violent windstorm, three-foot-long sparks shot up from the tops of the gypsum sand dunes of White Sands National Monument. The friction of fierce winds and blowing sand apparently created huge static charges on the dunes, which triggered the sparks.

April 3, 1974

THE PICKY TORNADO: Despite demolishing an entire farmhouse in Xenia, Ohio, one of the worst tornadoes ever to hit the country left untouched a mirror, a case of eggs and a box of highly fragile Christmas ornaments.

January 19, 1985

FROZEN ALIVE: When two-year-old Michael Troche wandered outside his home in Milwaukee, the morning temperatures had plummeted far below zero due to a record-breaking cold snap. When his father discovered the boy's body several hours later, young Michael's limbs had hardened; ice crystals had formed on and beneath his skin, and he had stopped

breathing for an unknown time. His core temperature had fallen to 60 degrees F. At the hospital, a massive recovery operation began. Over a period of three days, the boy recovered; he suffered no brain damage. Apparently the windchill had frozen him so rapidly that his metabolism required very little oxygen.

July 9, 1995

NO SAFETY ANYWHERE: Lightning from a storm in Bristol, Fla., struck a tree, sending a power surge through the water in a nearby septic tank. The exploding water catapulted a 69-year-old man sitting on his toilet into the air. A hospital treated and released the man, who suffered only elevated blood pressure and tingling in his lower extremities. W

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