

Comments and Communications

Do Fish Fall from the Sky?

In view of the prevailing skepticism about rains of fish, my own observations of this phenomenon may interest the readers of *Science*.

A rainfall of fish occurred on October 23, 1947 in Marksville, Louisiana, while I was conducting biological investigations for the Department of Wild Life and Fisheries. In the morning of that day, between seven and eight o'clock, fish ranging from two to nine inches in length fell on the streets and in yards, mystifying the citizens of that southern town. I was in the restaurant with my wife having breakfast, when the waitress informed us that fish were falling from the sky. We went immediately to collect some of the fish. The people in town were excited. The director of the Marksville Bank, J. M. Barham, said he had discovered upon arising from bed that fish had fallen by hundreds in his yard, and in the adjacent yard of Mrs. J. W. Joffrion. The cashier of the same bank, J. E. Gremillion, and two merchants, E. A. Blanchard and J. M. Brouillette, were struck by falling fish as they walked toward their places of business about 7:45 a.m. There were spots on Main Street, in the vicinity of the bank (a half block from the restaurant) averaging one fish per square yard. Automobiles and trucks were running over them. Fish also fell on the roofs of houses.

They were freshwater fish native to local waters, and belonging to the following species: Large-mouth black bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), goggle-eye (*Chaenobryttus coronarius*), two species of sunfish (*Lepomis*), several species of minnows and hickory shad (*Pomolobus medocris*). The latter species were the most common. I personally collected from Main Street and several yards on Monroe Street, a large jar of perfect specimens, and preserved them in Formalin, in order to distribute them among various museums. A local citizen who was struck by the fish told me that the fish were frozen; however, the specimens I collected, although cold, were not frozen. There is at least one record, in 1896 at Essen, Germany, of frozen fish falling from the sky. The largest fish in my collection was a large-mouth black bass $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches long. The largest falling fish on record was reported from India and weighed over six pounds.

The fish that fell in Marksville were absolutely fresh, and were fit for human consumption. The area in which they fell was approximately 1,000 feet long and about 75 or 80 feet wide, extending in a north-southerly direction, and was covered unevenly by fish. The actual falling of the fish occurred in somewhat short intervals, during foggy and comparatively calm weather. The velocity of the wind on the ground did not exceed eight miles per hour. The New Orleans weather bureau had no report

of any large tornado, or updrift, in the vicinity of Marksville at that time. However, James Nelson Gowanloch, chief biologist for the Louisiana Department of Wild Life and Fisheries, and I had noticed the presence of numerous small tornadoes, or "devil dusters" the day before the "rain of fish" in Marksville. Fish rains have nearly always been described as being accompanied by violent thunderstorms and heavy rains. This, however, was not the case in Marksville.

Certainly occurrences of this nature are rare, and are not always reported, but nevertheless they are well known. The first mention of the phenomenon was made by Athanaseus in his *De pluvia piscium* nearly two thousand years ago, and E. W. Gudger, in his four collective articles, reports 78 cases of falling fish from the sky. There is no reason for anyone to devalue the scientific evidence. Many people have never seen tornadoes, but they do not doubt them, and they accept the fact that wind can lift and carry heavy objects. Why can't fish be lifted with water and carried by the whirlwind?

Oyster Laboratory, Biloxi, Mississippi A. D. BAJKOV

The Linda Hall Scientific Library, Kansas City, Missouri

Readers of scientific literature are watching with great satisfaction the impressive growth of the Linda Hall Library in Kansas City. This library, by agreement, is to be devoted exclusively to books and periodicals on science and technology. It should become the mecca for all scientific readers of the western central states.

The library was created eight years ago by an endowment in the will of Herbert F. Hall, a business leader of the vicinity. An estate of sixteen acres, four miles south of the business district of Kansas City and adjoining the campus of the University of Kansas City, was provided for the purpose. The library bears the name of the wife of Herbert F. Hall (both Mr. and Mrs. Hall are now deceased). The first books and periodicals were purchased three years ago.

The library is only a few blocks away from the Nelson Art Gallery, the Art Institute, and Rockhurst College. It will be near the grounds of the Midwest Research Institute when that organization moves to its new site in Kansas City.

Five trustees, appointed by Mr. Hall, decided that the new library should cover "the field of basic science and technology" and minister freely to the needs of "science scholars and research men." The library works in close cooperation with other libraries of Kansas City, and, under the terms of the will, it serves the scientific and technical book needs of the University of Kansas City faculty and student body. The University has transferred most of its books on science to the shelves of the Linda Hall Library and all science periodicals necessary to the science departments of the University are now provided by the Linda Hall Library.

Books and periodicals are coming in so rapidly that hardly any accurate statement can be made now on what