

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band: - (1965)
Heft: 1483

Artikel: Weather news
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-694406>

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WEATHER NEWS

In a survey of human biometeorology produced by the World Meteorological Organisation in co-operation with the International Society for Biometeorology, revealed that the weather can make the difference between success and failure for some students in stiff examinations. Similar effects can be produced on driving, and some claims go as far as "predominance of males in conceptions during cold periods". These facts or allegations were stated in an article in "The Times" on 17th June. Just how the weather in Switzerland during the last few weeks can be evaluated, is anybody's guess — it was very cold in April, and May was a cooler month than had been hoped for, with considerably less sunshine than normally. There were only a few warm sunny days in the middle of the month, followed by thunderstorm and rain. On 17th May, a herd of 5-600 sheep was drowned in the high waters of the Rhine near Chur. A week later, avalanches caused extensive damage in the Weisstannental and near Gletsch.

Early in June, the rivers and lakes began to rise rapidly. Whitsun was cool and rainy, and the first reports of bad floods in the region of Lake Constance began to arrive. The Zurich Oberland and the Toesstal were also hit by severe flooding. Main roads and fields, meadows and cellars were soon under water, and on 11th June, a dam in the Murg near Frauenfeld burst and caused extensive flooding. In some parts of the country, there were earth slides. The Rhine was higher than for many years and flooded its banks near Koblenz, Kaiserstuhl and Ellikon. Floods were reported also from Zurich. The Lake of Constance rose by 36 cm. in two days and flooded its shores, for the first time since 1926. Within twenty-four hours, the water of the Rhine increased by 60 cubic metres per second near Schaffhausen. Navigation was stopped.

The worst reports came from the Thurgau where nothing like it had been seen for 55 years. The damage is extremely large — nowhere in Switzerland has there been such a catastrophe for decades. Fortunately, the

water level went down within a couple of days, and, thanks to feverish activities, some of the damage could be repaired and people and cattle were able to return to their homes and stables.

In the night of 17th June, bad thunderstorms raged in Switzerland, and the level of Lake Constance rose again, its level being 1.42 m. higher than at the same time last year. The storms also affected the Jura, and the Ajoie district was flooded in parts. More damage resulted, and the whole harvest in the Thur Valley was definitely considered lost. Ten million francs is the estimated loss.

After an interval, the Lake of Constance began to rise once more on 21st June, and more thunderstorms caused further havoc in many parts of the country. The Rhine, too, rose again on 24th June, and on 25th June, tornado-like storms hit Central Switzerland and additional damage was reported, not least by lightning.

Fortunately, the weather became warm and sunny, and visitors returning from Switzerland complained of heatwaves. Heavy thunderstorms early in July caused new flooding in Berne, the Cantons of Fribourg and Vaud. Rivers overflowed their banks, and hailstorms caused heavy damage, especially in the Ticino and Vaud. On 16th July, two farmsteads near Langenthal were struck by lightning and completely destroyed. Generally speaking, the summer so far (on going to press) has been unsettled and cooler than is normal. The asparagus harvest of the Valais was the lowest ever remembered, barely reaching 100 metric tons — even last year's, also a bad one, reached 174 tons.

(Mainly by courtesy of A.T.S.)

OUR NEXT ISSUE

The "Swiss Observer" is published on the second and fourth Friday of the month. Our next issue will appear on 27th August. As the Editor will attend the Assembly of the Swiss Abroad and hopes to add a few days of rest, any reports or articles received will be kept for the first issue in September.

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