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## Predictions — Fact or Folly

by Edwin Wollenberg

Late summer and early fall arouses the curiosity in many people as to what type of winter we will have. The Farmer's Almanac prophecy is accepted by many of us as gospel truth. This is the season when years ago the weather prophets, or "goose-bones", as they were called by many old timers, were so articulate. They consulted the birds and beasts, weighed acorns, counted corn husks, measured the stripes on woolly bear caterpillars, and made their prediction about the coming winter. Those who were right more often than wrong, got a deserved reputation as "goose-bones" — experts on foretelling the future weather.

Much of the fur-and-feather detail, of course, was hocus-pocus. It only survived because the birds and beasts couldn't talk, and the so-called "goose-bones" would. Actually, most of their predictions were a consequence of the summer just past, not secret signs of the future. A good growing season, with plenty of food and only normal competition for it, always produced strong healthy birds and animals, and thick coats of fur and feathers for the winter ahead. When there is a big acorn crop the squirrels are busier than usual hoarding, and the stripes of woolly bear caterpillar vary from one individual to another, year by year.

The best of the "goose-bone" prophets were shrewd guessers with long memories and an uncanny sense of weather. They knew that mysterious messages from nature had an age-old appeal, and they were temporarily related to the ancient wise pronouncements. Today's Weather Bureau may commune with highs and lows and jet streams and even with solar cycles, and it may run up its cautious forecasts on complex computers; but it doesn't seem to care what the owls are saying, or the geese, or the squirrels and muskrats.

The back-country or "goose-bone" prophets did, or said they did, and we miss them. And many of us still want to believe them.

## The Ohio State University Golf Course Maintenance Short Course

The fifth annual OSU Golf Course Maintenance Short Course will be conducted January 7-11, 1991, at the Parke Hotel in Columbus, Ohio. This short course will provide general and basic information on golf-turfgrass maintenance. Emphasis will be placed on principles of agronomy, soils, entomology and plant pathology. The short course is designed for all golf course personnel including golf course employees, foremen, assistant superintendents and superintendents seeking a more formalized training in the basics of golf-turfgrass maintenance. Attendees will qualify for recertification credits from the Ohio Department of Agriculture for Licensed Pesticide Applicators. Certified Golf Course Superintendents (CGCS) will qualify for continuing education units from the GCSAA. The registration fee is \$350.00. The deadline to register is December 12, 1990, or until 50 applications are received. Lodging facilities are available at the Parke Hotel or other hotels in the area. For more information, please contact Sue White at 614/292-7457 for course content, or the Department of Conferences and Institutes at 614/292-4230 for course registration.

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