

A TECHNIQUE FOR WRITING FIELD NOTES IN WET WEATHER

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One of the greatest drawbacks to intensive field work in areas of high rainfall is the difficulty of recording data on paper during wet weather. The traditional surveyor's technique of working under an awning or large umbrella is impracticable for anyone who has to work by himself and is difficult in a wind. Writing on paper held inside an inverted polythene bag is cumbersome and is practicable only for occasional notes.

A thoroughly satisfactory method is by using plastic tracing film instead of paper. Writing or sketching is done with a soft BB lead pencil on the transparent film over a hard white plastic underlay which may be ruled for recording data in tabular form. I use foolscap sheets of "Ethulon", manufactured by May & Baker Ltd., stapled to a waterproof hardboard back, in pads of 20 sheets held firm at the side by a stationery clip. The underlay is a sheet of opaque, white, flexible PVC, 1 mm. thick, ruled in waterproof ink.

This method has been tested in heavy rain, wind and snow and has proved completely successful in

all instances. It has the further advantage that data may be directly photocopied from the plastic.

There are, however, several disadvantages: the greatest is that the film is expensive, the retail price in New Zealand being \$8.00 for a roll of 30 in. x 30 ft., or approximately 20 cents per foolscap sheet; writing can be erased but not completely enough for whole sheets to be used again; the film is imported in rolls which makes cutting and assembling the sheets into pads difficult; the blue tint of the film makes the data more difficult to read than on paper (although a Xerox copy does not have this disadvantage); the backing sheet and pad of film is heavier than a paper notebook; finally, the film is soluble in dimethyl phthalate, so any worker who relies on a dimethyl phthalate insect repellent for protection has to work with extra care.

For those whose field work involves the collection of specimens, the last refinement is to use draw-string bags of nylon or terylene net to hold specimens, with labels of scrap "Ethulon". With such equipment field work can be done in even the worst weather.