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Department of Atmospheric Sciences Seminar Announcement

Department of Atmospheric Sciences, S.O.E.S.T., University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
2525 Correa Road, HIG 350; Honolulu, HI 96822 ☎956-8775



****Hybrid Seminar: In-Person & Virtual****

La Niña Came to Eden

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You are invited to our hybrid Atmospheric Sciences Spring 2022 seminar at PHYSCI 217 or via Zoom.

When: February 16, 2022 at 3:30PM HST

Meeting admission: 3:15PM HST

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://hawaii.zoom.us/j/92129706701>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Please save this information for future seminars.

Abstract:

In 1929, Dr Friedrich Ritter and his mistress Dore Strauch left their spouses and the turmoil of post-World War I Germany for the remote, rugged and uninhabited volcanic island of Floreana in the Galapagos archipelago. Their dream was to live self-sufficiently in an idyllic tropical setting unspoiled by civilization. Yachts stopping at Floreana after Ritter and Strauch established a homestead reported on their pioneering enterprise to the outside world in the early 1930s. The news created a sensation that subsequently attracted other settlers to the island, one of whom, a mysterious Austrian faux baroness, vexed Ritter and Strauch to the point of open hostility. Not all the participants in this drama survived the experience of colonizing Floreana though. A prolonged drought that gripped the island from 1933 to 1935 led to food shortages and ultimately the death of Dr. Ritter, who unwittingly ate tainted chicken out of desperation. The bizarre intrigues, extraordinary adventures, and struggles to endure on Floreana were chronicled in Strauch's 1936 memoir "Satan Came to Eden" and a 2013 Hollywood documentary based on it. A story that has not been told is how climate variability, and in particular an extended period of cold La Niña conditions in 1933-35, led to the drought that caused food shortages on the island and the untimely demise of Dr. Ritter. We will use atmospheric reanalyses, contemporaneous marine meteorological observations in the vicinity of islands, and historical accounts from the broader Pacific basin, to describe the evolution of the 1933-35 La Niña and how it affected the human drama as it unfolded on Floreana Island. This protracted La Niña event had impacts felt in other parts of the globe as well and in particular was a major influence on the development of the 1930s Dust Bowl in the southern plains of the United States.