

A Science Service Feature

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! WHY THE WEATHER ! Mailed December 13, 1927

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UNDERGROUND ICE

Large masses of more or less clear ice are found in the permanently frozen ground of high latitudes; as, for example, the subsoil of the Siberian tundras. Such ice is variously known as "ground ice," "subsoil ice," "fossil ice," "stone ice," etc.

Even in the temperate zones there are places where subterranean deposits of ice are found through the whole or the greater part of the year. These occur in so-called "ice caves," scores of which are local wonders in America and elsewhere, or sometimes in deep gorges, or among great piles of rocks, as in the case of the celebrated Ice Mountain near North River Mills, West Virginia. It is popularly believed that the ice found in such places forms in summer and melts in winter, reversing the normal order of the seasons. What actually happens, at least in most cases, is that pockets of cold air gather in winter and remain because they have no outlet, while the ice is mainly formed from water that trickles down during the thaws of spring.

After a clear cold night, especially in the late autumn and early winter, the surface layer of a moist gravelly soil is often raised an inch or two by a mass of vertical columns or needles of ice. This ice is pushed up by the capillary action of soil moisture.

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