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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE DIVERSITY OF ICE

Ice is a protean substance. Falling from the sky in tiny crystals, separate or loosely aggregated, it constitutes snow. That famous impresario of winter wonders, Wilson A. Bentley, has photographed more than four thousand snow crystals through his microscope and no two were exactly alike. The ice on our windowpanes forms tracery in an endless variety of patterns. Cirrus clouds are composed of ice. How many kinds are there? Some specialists recognize twenty or thirty types, each capable of indefinite subclassification.

Hail and two other classes of hail-like precipitation -- sleet and graupel -- are forms of ice. Some fogs consist of ice. So does hoarfrost. Snow and ice in the mass are variously identified as snowfields, névé fields, glaciers of several sorts, ground ice, anchor ice ... and so on. One genus of frozen water -- sea ice -- includes such species as icebergs, field ice, drift ice, pancake ice, brash and growlers.

No wonder several big books have been written on the natural history of ice. One of them, by Dr. Dobrowolski still, unfortunately, awaiting translation from Polish into some more widely familiar tongue - contains nearly a thousand pages.

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