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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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RIME AND HOARFROST

In general literature the terms "rime" and "hoarfrost" are used interchangeably, but in the meteorological vocabulary these terms are applied to two quite distinct kinds of atmospheric precipitation. Rime is a rough or feathery deposit of ice formed in cold weather by drifting fog. The most remarkable examples are found on mountains and in the polar regions. It forms on the branches and twigs of trees and on the corners, joints and edges of upright structures, but not to any great extent on horizontal surfaces. Since it is built up of fog particles driven by the wind, it grows out most rapidly on the windward side of objects. The deposits are sometimes enormous. At certain mountain observatories it has been seen to grow at the rate of an inch an hour. Rime should not be confused with "glaze," a form of clear, smooth ice produced when rain falls on objects chilled below the freezing point.

Hoarfrost does not usually conform to the schoolbook definition of "frozen dew." As a rule it is formed, not by the freezing of dewdrops, but by the condensation of the invisible water vapor of the atmosphere into crystals of various shapes, quite unlike spherical frozen drops. Some of the most beautiful deposits of hoarfrost are found on the surface ice of lakes, streams and glaciers. They are called "ice flowers."

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