

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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SNOW CRYSTALS

The beautiful and endlessly varied forms assumed by snow crystals are much more familiar to most people through the pictures of them published in books than through personal observation of the crystals themselves. The best time to observe them, with or without the aid of a magnifying-glass, is when snow is just beginning to fall in calm air and when the crystals fall on a dark surface, such as a black coat-sleeve.

As the fall of snow increases, many crystals reach the earth in a damaged condition, on account of collisions with others during their downward passage. Moreover, many of them usually combine into conglomerates of crystal fragments, forming snowflakes, so that the forms of the individual crystals cannot be distinguished. Most snow falls in flakes in our latitudes, while in the polar regions the single crystals are somewhat more common.

The margins of snowflakes are turned up slightly, on account of the resistance of the air through which they have fallen. The largest flakes exceed four inches in diameter.

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