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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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"DIAMOND DUST"

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A variety of snow crystal seen only in intensely cold weather and most common in the polar regions is known as "diamond snow" or, colloquially, as "diamond dust." The French call it "poudrin." The individual particles are so tiny that they are invisible or barely visible to the naked eye, but when they sink through the air in clear weather they show up as specks of light reflecting the sun's rays. On account of their minute size they fall very slowly. By bending and reflecting the sunbeams these crystals produce haloes of several kinds close to the observer.

Their production of haloes indicates that they are of simple pattern and this is in accord with the few observations that have been made of them under a magnifying glass or microscope. Dr. A. Dobrowolski, who studied them in the Antarctic, found that they were always in the shape of hexagonal plates, with or without branching extensions, and were never needle-shaped. They rarely exceeded a twenty-fifth of an inch in diameter and were mostly less than half that size.

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