



HOW SNOWFLAKES ARE MADE

Contrary to popular belief, snow is not made up of frozen raindrops. Instead it develops from particles of water vapour which have been transformed directly into crystals without first going through the liquid stage. Snow crystals can form only when the temperature at which the air becomes saturated with moisture is lower than 0° C. Each snowflake initially consists of a tiny six-pointed crystal but once formed, flakes may increase in size by combining with other crystals. Large snowflakes normally form only when the temperature is not too much below freezing, never at very low temperatures. While snowflakes are falling downward to the ground, they may jostle and bump against each other causing some of the crystals to be damaged.

Snow is a valuable resource in our northern climate. The snow which accumulates during winter is an important source of melt water needed to replenish the spring water table. Snow cover also serves as an excellent insulator, reducing heat loss from the soil and preventing frost from penetrating too deeply into the ground. Lack of snow cover can result in considerable damage to crops like red clover.

Some wildlife species rely on snow for winter survival. Mice construct subnivian (under the snow) tunnels where, protected from extremes of cold and out of sight of predators they can move about in search of food. Birds like Ruffed Grouse are also known to seek warmth and shelter by digging into a snowdrift on a cold winter's night.

The frost which forms beautiful and delicate patterns on our winter windowpanes originates in much the same way as snow. When the warm moist air inside our homes comes in contact with a cold surface like a pane of glass, the water vapour in the air freezes and forms patterns of crystals on the window.

BEAVERS BUSY ON NIGHT SHIFT. John Wright reports that beavers in his area put in a busy night recently. In one overnight period they cut down six, six-inch deciduous trees near the Montague River. Perhaps the early snowfall on November 12 reminded them that winter is approaching faster than they expected, and they decided it was high time to get the dam and lodge winterized and to lay in a good supply of food.

