

Ice Circles, A Wonder of the World

Have you ever walked outside and looked at nature and just been amazed at what you saw? The forces at work in nature are absolutely amazing. The things that can be created from nature and the environment alone will have you question everything that happens in it.

When you think of nature, the first thing that comes to mind is the environment in the form of scenic views. A river gently flowing downhill with clear skies and a mountain in the background, or how great the landscape of the world looks after a good snow, or maybe even how lava erupting from a volcano can add on to existing land or create entirely new ones. We find Trees, forests, rivers, mountains, and animals in the environment. All of these things can be found in nature.

What's really amazing about nature is how specific phenomena can happen in these environments completely void of human activity. It's almost like nature's form of art.

We know that snow is already fascinating since each individual snowflake is unique and one of a kind, but there are other fascinating occurrences in nature aside from snowflakes and they are ice circles. Ice circles are exactly what they sound like, slow rotating circles of ice that can be found in rivers in cold climates.

In order for these ice circles to form there has to be a delicate balance between the eddies of slow-moving rivers and the temperature of the river has to be at freezing or below freezing. An eddy is a fluid dynamics term that means the swirling of a fluid, which can cause a reverse current when the fluid flows past an obstacle. This is the reason why it is a delicate balance, if the river is moving too fast then the eddies can be disrupted, however, if it is moving too slow then the eddies can freeze. The river has to be moving at just the right speed so that the eddies are not disrupted, and cold enough that the eddy forms, but slowly freezes over a period of time which will eventually cause a circle of ice to form and continue moving in the direction of the eddy.

These ice circles will most often be seen around bends in rivers, where there is a higher chance of an eddy forming. These ice circles can get up to a diameter of 50 feet and are generally found in North America and Scandinavia, although can also be found in other places around the world with cold climates.

This goes to show how truly amazing nature really is.

Information gathered from here. (<https://www.geolounge.com/ice-circles/>)

Photo of ice circle on the middle fork of the Snoqualmie River. Christian Sorensen

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