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ENCYCLOPEDIA of SNOW, ICE AND GLACIERS

edited by

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Contents

Contributors	XX1	Anabatic Winds: In Relation with Snow/Glacier Basin	39
Preface	xli	Umesh K. Haritashya, Vijay P. Singh and	3)
Acknowledgments	xliii	Pratap Singh	
		Anchor Ice	40
Guide to the Reader	xlv	D. P. Dobhal	
Ablation Depression	1	Andean Glaciers	40
Lasafam Iturrizaga		Mathias Vuille	
Ablatometer	3	Anisotropic Ice Flow	44
Rijan B. Kayastha		Olivier Ĝagliardini	
Acidity of Glacier Ice	3	Antarctica	45
Cunde Xiao		Rasik Ravindra and Arun Chaturvedi	
Active Ice Wedge	4	Anti-Icing	54
Pratima Pandey		Rijan B. Kayastha	
Adfreeze	4	Anti-Syngenetic Ice Wedge	54
Pratima Pandey		Pratima Pandey	
Aerial Photogrammetry for Glacial Monitoring	4	Appalachian Glacier Complex in Maritime Canada	54
Martin Kappas		Rudolph R. Stea	
Alaskan Glaciers	16	Arctic Hydroclimatology	58
Bruce F. Molnia	10	Jessica Ellen Cherry	
Albedo	23	Artificial Ground Freezing	61
Thomas C. Grenfell		Rijan B. Kayastha	-
Alps	35	Artificial Production of Snow	61
Martin Beniston		Carmen de Jong	
Altai-Sayan Glaciers	38	Atmosphere-Snow/Ice Interactions	66
Vladimir Aizen		Timo Vihma	30

viii	CONT	ENTS	
Atmospheric Circulation and Glaciochemical Records Shichang Kang	75	Catastrophic Rock Slope Failures and Mountain Glaciers Kenneth Hewitt, John J. Clague and Philip Deline	113
Automated Glacier Mapping Frank Paul	76	Catchment Glacier D. P. Dobhal	127
Basal Sediment Evacuation by Subglacial Drainage Systems Darrel A. Swift	85	Caucasus Mountains Chris R. Stokes	127
Base Flow/Groundwater Flow Debasmita Misra, Ronald P. Daanen and Anita M. Thompson	90	Characteristics of Snow and Glacier Fed Rivers in Mountainous Regions with Special Reference to Himalayan Basins Akhouri Pramod Krishna	128
Bed (Bottom) Topography Vijay Kumar	93	Chemical Composition of Snow, Ice, and Glaciers <i>Amanda M. Grannas</i>	133
Bed Forms (Fluvial) Vijay Kumar	93	Chemical and Microbe Records in Snow and Ice Liu Yongqin	135
Bed Roughness Vijay Kumar	94	Chemical Processes in Snow and Ice <i>Amanda M. Grannas</i>	138
Bed Strength Vijay Kumar	94	Circulation and Mixing in Ice-Covered Lakes Lars Bengtsson	139
Benchmark Glacier Tobias Bolch	95	Cirque Glaciers Øyvind Paasche	141
Biogeochemistry of Sea Ice David N. Thomas	98	Climate Change and Glaciers Arun B. Shrestha	145
Blue Ice Richard Bintanja	102	Climate Variability and High Altitude Temperature and Precipitation	153
Bottom Melting or Undermelt (Ice Shelf) Ashok Kumar Verma	103	Mathias Vuille Cloudburst	156
Brash Ice Chelamallu Hariprasad	103	Vijay Kumar Cohesion	157
Calving Glaciers Charles R. Warren	105	P. Pradeep Kumar	
Canadian Rockies and Coast Mountains of Canada	106	Cold-Based Glaciers Reginald D. Lorrain and Sean J. Fitzsimons	157
John J. Clague, Brian Menounos and Roger Wheate	100	Condensation Nuclei P. Pradeep Kumar	161
Cascade Mountains, USA Rijan B. Kayastha	111	Confluence of Rivers Anju Chaudhary	161
Cascade System Rijan B. Kayastha	112	Congelation Ice Pratima Pandey	163
Catastrophic Flooding Fiona Tweed	112	Crack Pratima Pandey	163

	CONT	TENTS	ix
Creep Christophe Lambiel, Reynald Delaloye and Isabelle Gärtner-Roer	163	Debris Tobias Bolch	186
Crevasses C. J. van der Veen	165	Debris Thermal Properties and Impact on Ice Ablation Ryohei Suzuki	188
Critical Temperature Pratima Pandey	168	Debris-Covered Glaciers Martin P. Kirkbride	190
Crush Pratima Pandey	168	Deglaciation Vinvent Rinterknecht	192
Crust Pratima Pandey	168	Degree-Days Roger J. Braithwaite	196
Cryoconite Nozomu Takeuchi	168	Depletion of Snow Cover Sanjay K. Jain	200
Cryodessication P. Pradeep Kumar	171	Deposition from Debris-Rich Ice Gulab Singh and Farjana S. Birajdar	201
Cryofront P. Pradeep Kumar	171	Digital Elevation Model Generation Over Glacierized Region	202
Cryogenesis P. Pradeep Kumar	171	Thierry Toutin Digital Image Information Extraction Techniques	
Cryogenic Aquiclude P. Pradeep Kumar	171	for Snow Cover Mapping from Remote Sensing Data Manoj K. Arora, Aparna Shukla and	213
Cryogenic Fabric P. Pradeep Kumar	172	Ravi P. Gupta Direct Surface Runoff	232
Cryolithology P. Pradeep Kumar	172	Lars Bengtsson	
Cryopeg P. Pradeep Kumar	172	Discharge/Streamflow Debasmita Misra, Ronald P. Daanen and Anita M. Thompson	234
Cryosol P. Pradeep Kumar	172	Distributary Channels Anju Chaudhary	236
Cryostatic Pressure Pratima Pandey	173	Diurnal Cycle of Runoff Darrel A. Swift	237
Cryostructure Pratima Pandey	173	Diverging Ice Flow Gulab Singh and Farjana S. Birajdar	239
Cryoturbation <i>P. Pradeep Kumar</i>	173	Drift Glacier/Ice/Snow Gulab Singh and Farjana S. Birajdar	240
Dating Glacial Landforms Jason P. Briner	175	Dry and Wet Snow Line/Zone Ravi P. Gupta	240
Dead Ice D. P. Dobhal	186	Dry Snow <i>Ravi P. Gupta</i>	241

x	CONTE	NTS	
Dye Tracer Investigations of Glacier Hydrology Peter Nienow	242	Forbes Band Gulab Singh	296
Dynamics of Glaciers Hester Jiskoot	245	Formation and Deformation of Basal Ice Simon J. Cook	297
Elongation Ratio Vijay Kumar	257	Frazil Gulab Singh	300
Englacial Conduit D. P. Dobhal	257	Freezing Bottom (Ice Shelf) Gulab Singh	300
Englacial Processes Andrew G. Fountain	258	Freezing Meltwater Gulab Singh and F. S. Birajdar	301
Environmental Isotopes Bhishm Kumar	261	Freezing and Thawing Index Jiang Fengqing and Zhang Yanwei	301
Epigenetic Ice Chelamallu Hariprasad	262	Frequency Analysis of Snow Storms Stanley A. Changnon	302
Epiglacial Morphology Claudio Smiraglia and Guglielmina Diolaiuti	262	Fresh Water Storage Pratima Pandey	303
Equilibrium-Line Altitude (ELA) Jostein Bakke and Atle Nesje	268	Frictional Melting Pratima Pandey	303
Erosion of Hard Rock Bed D. P. Dobhal	277	Frost Alan W. Rempel	303
Erosion Rate Subhajit Sinha	277	Frozen Soil Hydrology Ronald P. Daanen, Debasmita Misra and Anita M. Thompson	306
Estimation of Glacier Volume and Volume Change by Scaling Methods David B. Bahr	278	Frozen Toe (Outer Zone of Glacier Snout) Pratima Pandey	311
Estuary Ice Cover	281	Gelisols Divya Dudeja	313
Fast Ice D. P. Dobhal	289	Geochemistry of Snow and Ice Tandong Yao, Yongqin Liu, Huabiao Zhao and Wusheng Yu	313
Finger Rafting Dominic Vella and John Wettlaufer	289	Geocryology Amit Kumar	324
Firn Rachel W. Obbard, Ian Baker and	290	GIS in Glaciology Jacob Napieralski	325
Rachel W. Lomonaco Fjords	293	Glacial Drainage Characteristics Richard A. Marston	328
Umesh K. Haritashya, Vijay P. Singh and Pratap Singh	<i>293</i>	Glacial Ecosystems Nozomu Takeuchi	330
Foliation Gulab Singh	296	Glacial Erosion Ping Fu and Jonathan Harbor	332

	CON	TENTS	xi
Glacial Erratic D. P. Dobhal	341	Glacier Surging Hester Jiskoot	415
Glacial Geomorphology and Landforms Evolution <i>Alan R. Gillespie</i>	341	Glacier System Rajesh Kumar	428
Glacial Grooves D. P. Dobhal	358	Glacier Toe Rajesh Kumar	429
Glacial Overdeepening Christopher Lloyd	358	Glaciers of the Karakoram Himalaya Kenneth Hewitt	429
Glacial Striations D. P. Dobhal	359	Glacieret Rajesh Kumar	436
Glacial Trough D. P. Dobhal	359	Glacierization Rajesh Kumar	436
Glacial/Interglacial Cycles Michel Crucifix	359	Glacioeustasy Amit Kumar	436
Glaciation During Times of Enhanced/Reduced Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide Andrew B. G. Bush	366	Glaciofluvial Rajesh Kumar	437
Glaciations and Groundwater Flow Systems Jean-Michel Lemieux and Edward A. Sudicky	372	Glaciogenic Deposits Rajesh Kumar	437
Glacier D. P. Dobhal	376	Glaciohydraulic Supercooling Fiona Tweed	438
Glacier Bird of the Andes Douglas R. Hardy and Spencer P. Hardy	377	Glacioisostasy Amit Kumar	439
Glacier Cave Monohar Arora	377	Glaciolacustrine Himali Panthri	440
Glacier Field Studies: Important Things to Notice John F. Shroder	378	Glaciology Peter G. Knight	440
Glacier Hydrology Pratap Singh	379	Glaciomarine Amit Kumar	443
Glacier Lake Outburst Floods Lasafam Iturrizaga	381	Glaciostatic Pressure/Stress Divya Dudeja	443
Glacier Mass Balance Wilfried Haeberli	399	Glaciotectonic Structures, Landforms, and Processes	444
Glacier Motion/Ice Velocity Terry Hughes	408	James S. Aber and Andrzej Ber Global Climate Modeling in Cryospheric	450
Glacier Pothole Rajesh Kumar	414	Assessment Jeffrey Ridley	458
Glacier Sliding Rajesh Kumar	415	Global Outlook of Snowcover, Sea Ice, and Glaciers Mauri Pelto	461

xii	CONT	ENTS	
Global Warming and its Effect on Snow/Ice/Glaciers Stephen J. Déry	468	Horizontal Component of Velocity Rijan B. Kayastha	530
GPS in Glaciology, Applications Matt A. King	471	Hummocks (Peat) Subhajit Sinha	530
GRACE in Glaciology John Wahr	474	Hydrochemical Characteristics of Snow, Ice, and Glaciers Jacob Clement Yde	530
Granulometry Amit Kumar	477	Hydrogen Isotopes Bhishm Kumar	533
Gravel Sheet Amit Kumar	477	Hydrographs Ian C. Willis	534
Gravitational Mass Movement Deposits D. P. Dobhal	477	Hydrologic Cycle and Snow Ronald P. Daanen, Debasmita Misra and	538
Gravity Flow (Mass Flow) Rajesh Kumar	477	Anita M. Thompson Hydrological Response in Glacierized Basins	541
Gray-White Ice Chelamallu Hariprasad	478	Ian C. Willis Hydrology of Jökulhlaups	544
Greenland Glaciers Outside the Ice Sheet <i>Jacob C. Yde</i>	478	Fiona Tweed Hydropower: Hydroelectric Power Generation	
Greenland Ice Sheet Poul Christoffersen	484	from Alpine Glacier Melt Mauri S. Pelto	546
Ground Ice D. P. Dobhal	489	Hypsometry Andrés Rivera, Fiona Cawkwell, Camilo Rada and Claudio Bravo	551
Ground Penetrating Radar Measurements Over Glaciers David C. Nobes	490	Hysteresis Vijay Kumar	554
Heat and Mass Transfer in Sea Ice Daniel J. Pringle	505	Ice Yoshinori Furukawa	557
High Elevation Glacio-Climatology Vladimir Aizen	507	Ice Age Matthias Kuhle	560
Himalaya John F. Shroder	510	Ice Age Cycles: Data, Models, and Uncertainties Donald Rapp	565
Himalayan Glaciers in 2010 and 2035 J. Graham Cogley	520	Ice Age Development Theory Matthias Kuhle	576
Hindu Kush John F. Shroder	523	Ice Apron <i>Mahendra R. Bhutiyani</i>	581
Holocene Glacier Fluctuations Johannes Koch	525	Ice Caps Mahendra R. Bhutiyani	582
Horizontal Component of Ablation Rijan B. Kayastha	529	Ice Caves Mahendra R. Bhutiyani	583

	CONT	TENTS	xiii
Ice Core Nancy A. N. Bertler	584	International Polar Year 2007–2008 Ian Allison	647
Ice Covered Lakes Lars Bengtsson	589	Interstitial Ice P. Pradeep Kumar	649
Ice Dams Mahendra R. Bhutiyani	590	Intrusive Ice Chelamallu Hariprasad	649
Ice Sheet Alastair G. C. Graham	592	Inventory of Glaciers Frank Paul	650
Ice Sheet Mass Balance Eric Rignot	608	Inverse Methods in Glaciology G. Hilmar Gudmundsson	653
Ice Shelf Adrian Jenkins	613	Inversion Layers Mahendra R. Bhutiyani	656
Ice-Cored Moraines Sven Lukas	616	Inverted Cup Depth Hoar Crystals Mahendra R. Bhutiyani	656
Ice-Dammed Lakes Fiona Tweed	619	Irreducible Water Mahendra R. Bhutiyani	657
Ice-Marginal Deposition Mahendra R. Bhutiyani	621	Isotope Analysis Tandong Yao, Wusheng Yu, Huabiao Zhao and	657
Ice-Marginal Processes Matthew R. Bennett	623	Yongqin Liu Isotopic Characteristics of Ice, Snow, and Glaciers	665
Ice-Volcano Interactions Hugh Tuffen	625	Bhism Kumar Isotopic Fractionation of Freezing Water	668
Icefall Mahendra R. Bhutiyani	628	Martyn Tranter Isotopic Signatures	669
Iceland Glaciers Oddur Sigurðsson	630	Bhishm Kumar	
ICESat Data in Glaciological Studies Thomas A. Neumann, H. J. Zwally and	636	Kame and Kettle Topography Amit Kumar	671
Bob E. Schutz Icicle	640	Katabatic Wind: In Relation With Snow and Glaciers Amit Kumar	671
P. Pradeep Kumar		Kilimanjaro	672
Icing P. Pradeep Kumar	640	Douglas R. Hardy	
Impacts of Snow and Glaciers on Runoff Sarah Boon	640	Kunlun Mountains Jingshi Liu	679
Interception of Snow Manmohan Kumar Goel	646	Lake Ellsworth John Woodward, Martin J. Siegert, Andy M. Smith and Neil Ross	683
Interflow Manmohan Kumar Goel	647	Lake Ice Rajesh Kumar	686

xiv	CONT	ENTS	
Lake Vostok Malte Thoma	687	Marginal Channel (Lateral Meltwater Channel) Amit Kumar	724
Laminated Sediments Rajesh Kumar	690	Marginal Ice Zones Rajesh Kumar	724
Landforms of Glacial Deposition John F. Shroder	690	Marine Glaciers Rajesh Kumar	725
Landforms of Glacial Erosion John F. Shroder	692	Marine Ice Sheet Rajesh Kumar	725
Landforms of Glacial Transportation John F. Shroder	693	Mechanical Weathering Rajesh Kumar	725
Landscapes of Glacial Erosion Martin P. Kirkbride	694	Median Elevation of Glaciers D. P. Dobhal	726
Last Glacial Maximum Glaciation (LGM/LGP) in High Asia (Tibet and Surrounding Mountains)	697	Mediterranean Glaciers and Glaciation <i>Philip D. Hughes</i>	726
Matthias Kuhle Latent Heat of Condensation	702	Melt Runoff Modeling Pratap Singh	730
Prem Datt Latent Heat of Fusion/Freezing Prem Datt	703	Melting Processes Luke Copland	733
Latent Heat of Sublimation Prem Datt	703	Meltwater Channels Cliff Atkins	735
Latent Heat of Vaporization/Condensation	703	Meltwater Conduit D. P. Dobhal	738
Prem Datt Lateroglacial	704	Meltwater Erosion Rajesh Kumar	738
Lasafam Iturrizaga Lateroglacial Landform Systems	704	Meltwater Pressure Rajesh Kumar	739
Lasafam Iturrizaga Laurentide Ice Sheet	708	Meltwater Storage Pratap Singh	739
John T. Andrews Layering of Snow	713	Microorganisms Associated with Glaciers Vanya I. Miteva	741
Rajesh Kumar LIDAR in Glaciology	713	Monitoring and Warning Systems Markus Konz	744
Michael N. Demuth		Monsoonal Records Observed from Snow/Ice/Glacier	746
Little Ice Age Rajesh Kumar	722	Shichang Kang Moraine	747
Lobe Rajesh Kumar	722	Anders Schomacker Moulins	756
Mapping of Internal Glacial Layers David A. Braaten	723	Umesh K. Haritashya, Vijay P. Singh and Pratap Singh	730

	CON	TENTS	xv
Mount Everest Rijan B. Kayastha	756	Palaeo-Channel Vijay Kumar	803
Mount Kenya William C. Mahaney	758	Palaeo-Ice Stream Chris R. Stokes	803
Mountain Geomorphology David R. Butler	761	Palaeoclimate and Past Glaciations Philip D. Hughes	808
Natural Hazards Associated with Glaciers and Permafrost	763	Palaeohydrology Vijay Kumar	812
Andreas Kääb Negative Temperature Gradient (in Ice)	775	Pamirs Vladimir Aizen	813
Rajesh Kumar Neoglaciation	775	Pancake Ice Chelamallu Hariprasad	815
Rajesh Kumar Network of Stakes	775	Papua Ian Allison	815
Pratap Singh New Zealand Glaciers	775	Paraglacial Landscape Transformations Lasafam Iturrizaga	817
Wendy Lawson Niche Glacier	779	Patagonia Stephan Harrison	824
D. P. Dobhal Normalized-Difference Snow Index (NDSI) Dorothy K. Hall and George A. Riggs	779	Paternoster Lakes Umesh K. Haritashya, Vijay P. Singh and Pratap Singh	826
Novaya Zemlya Chris R. Stokes	781	Peak Flood Glacier Discharge Monohar Arora	827
Nye (N) Channels D. P. Dobhal	781	Percolation Zone Prem Datt	827
Ogives Divya Dudeja	783	Perennially Frozen Ground Monohar Arora	827
Optical Remote Sensing of Alpine Glaciers Duncan J. Quincey and Michael P. Bishop	783	Periglacial H. M. French	827
Orographic Precipitation Justin R. Minder and Gerard H. Roe	794	Permacrete Ashok Kumar Verma	841
Outlet Glacier Monohar Arora	799	Permafrost Yuri Shur, M. Torre Jorgenson and M. Z. Kanevskiy	841
Overburden Pressure Prem Datt	799	Permafrost on Asteroids William C. Mahaney	848
Oxygen Isotopes Bhishm Kumar	799	Permafrost and Climate Interactions Sharon L. Smith and Margo M. Burgess	852
Palaeo Glaciofluvial Sediment Systems Norm R. Catto	801	Permafrost Modeling Daniel Riseborough	858

xvi	CON	TENTS	
Permanent/Perpetual Snow Line Monohar Arora	859	Rating Curve Ian C. Willis	918
Physical Properties of Snow Florent Domine	859	Recession Coefficient Manmohan Kumar Goel	922
Piedmont Glaciers Monohar Arora	863	Recession of Discharge Manoj K. Jain	922
Pingo Himali Panthri	863	Reconstruction of the Last Glaciations in the Whole of Asia <i>Matthias Kuhle</i>	924
Plastic Deformation A. K. Singh	864	Recrystallization of Ice	932
Plastic Flow A. K. Singh	864	Ashok Kumar Verma Refreezing of Meltwater	932
Pleistocene Epoch Amit Kumar	865	Ashok Kumar Verma Regelation	933
Plucking Amit Kumar	865	Ashok Kumar Verma Remobilization (of Debris)	933
Polythermal Glaciers Neil F. Glasser	865	Renoj J. Thayyen	
Precipitation	867	Resedimentation Subhajit Sinha	933
Donna F. Tucker Proglacial Lakes	870	Retreat/Advance of Glaciers Luke Copland	934
Brenda L. Hall Quaternary Glaciation	873	Rime Ice Renoj J. Thayyen	939
Jürgen Ehlers and Philip Gibbard		River Ice Hydrology <i>Hung Tao Shen</i>	939
Radar Application in Snow, Ice, and Glaciers G. Venkataraman and Gulab Singh	883	Roche Moutonnees Himali Panthri	942
Radiative Transfer Modeling Jie Cheng and Shunlin Liang	903	Rock Glaciers John R. Giardino, Netra R. Regmi and	943
Radioactive Fallout Bhishm Kumar	913	John D. Vitek	0.40
Radioactive Isotopes Bhishm Kumar	913	Rocky Mountains Eric M. Leonard	948
Radioactivity Bhishm Kumar	914	Röthlisberger (R)-Channels Renoj J. Thayyen	952
Rain-Induced Snowmelt	915	Runoff Coefficient Manmohan Kumar Goel	952
Delphis F. Levia and Daniel J. Leathers Ram Resistance Prem Datt	917	Runoff Generation Anita M. Thompson, Debasmita Misra and Ronald P. Daanen	953

	CON	TENTS	xv
Runoff Observations Anita M. Thompson, Debasmita Misra and Ronald P. Daanen	955	Serac Markus Konz	102
Runout Distance A. K. Singh	957	Siberia Kazuyoshi Suzuki	102
Salinity C. K. Jain	959	Slush and Sleet of Snow A. K. Singh	103
Saltation C. K. Jain	959	Snow A. K. Singh	103
Scandinavian Glaciers Juha P. Lunkka	960	Snow Bed/Snow Bed Vegetation <i>Nadine Konz</i>	103
Sea Ice <i>Matti Leppäranta</i>	964	Snow Course A. K. Singh	103
Sea-Level Anny Cazenave	969	Snow Cover and Snowmelt in Forest Regions <i>Tobias Jonas and Richard Essery</i>	103
Seasonal Frost Chelamallu Hariprasad	974	Snow Cover Changes in the Alps Christoph Marty	103
Seasonal Snow Cover Amit Kumar	974	Snow Crystal Structure Kenneth G. Libbrecht	103
Sediment Budgets Helen E. Reid and Gary J. Brierley	975	Snow Deformation <i>Jerome B. Johnson</i>	104
Sediment Core and Glacial Environment Reconstruction Jostein Bakke and Øyvind Paasche	979	Snow Density Steven Fassnacht	104
Sediment Entrainment, Transport, and Deposition <i>Michael J. Hambrey and Neil F. Glasser</i>	984	Snow Depth Gavin Gong	104
Sediment Flux Source-To-Sink Achim A. Beylich	1003	Snow Drift <i>Richard Bintanja</i>	104
Sediment Gravity Flow George Postma	1005	Snow Gauge A. K. Singh	104
Sediment Routing Subhajit Sinha	1010	Snow Grains <i>Thomas H. Painter</i>	105
Sediment Transfer Modeling Richard Hodgkins	1010	Snow Hydrology Sarah Boon and Katie Burles	105
Sediment Yield Kelly MacGregor	1014	Snow Layer A. K. Singh	105
SEM Analysis of Glacial Sediments William C. Mahaney	1016	Snow Load A. K. Singh	106
Septa of Englacial Debris Subhajit Sinha	1027	Snow Metamorphism <i>A. K. Singh</i>	106

Show Microstructure
Snow Pellet
Snow Pillow 1062 A. K. Singh Subglacial Borehole Instrumentation Philip R. Porter Snow Pit 1063 A. K. Singh Subglacial Drainage System Bryn Hubbard Snow Ripening 1064 A. K. Singh Subglacial Lakes, Antarctic John C. Priscu Snow Skating 1064 Ashok Kumar Verma Subglacial Processes Scan Fitzsimons and Reginald Lorrain Snow Skiing 1066 Ashok Kumar Verma Subglacial Volcanism 1105 Snow Storm 1067 A. K. Singh Subglacial Weathering 1106 Snow and Vegetation Interaction 1067 Christopher A. Hiemstra and Glen E. Liston Subglacial Weathering 1106 Snow Water Equivalent 1070 A. K. Singh 1106 Snow Water Equivalent 1071 Nozomu Naito 1107 Amit Kumar Super Cooling Clouds 1108 Solifluction 1071 Pradeep Kumar 1108 Solifluction Indicated Meltwaters 1074 Supercooled Water 1108 Solute in Glacial Meltwaters 10
Snow Pit 1063 Subglacial Drainage System 1095 A. K. Singh Subglacial Lakes, Antarctic 1099 Snow Ripening 1064 Subglacial Lakes, Antarctic 1099 Snow Skating 1064 Subglacial Processes 1101 Snow Sking 1066 Subglacial Volcanism 1105 Snow Storm 1067 Hugh Tuffen 1106 Snow and Vegetation Interaction 1067 Markus Konz 1106 Snow Water Equivalent 1070 A. K. Singh 1106 Snow Water Equivalent 1070 Summer Accumulation Type Glaciers 1107 Snowboard 1071 Nozomu Naito 1108 Solifluction 1071 P. Pradeep Kumar 1108 Solituction Glacial Meltwaters 1074 Simon Cook 1108 Solutes in Glacial Meltwaters 1074 Supra-Glacial Debris Entrainments 1112 Solutes in Glacier Ice 1077 D. P. Dobhal 112 Renoj Thayyen Surface Energy Balance 1112
Snow Ripening A. K. Singh Subglacial Lakes, Antarctic John C. Priscu Subglacial Processes Subglacial Processes Subglacial Processes Subglacial Processes Subglacial Volcanism Ashok Kumar Verma Subglacial Volcanism Hugh Tuffen Subglacial Weathering Markus Konz Subglacial Weathering Subglacial Weathering Subglacial Weathering Markus Konz Subglacial Weathering Subglacial Weathering Markus Konz Subglacial Weathering Subglacial Weathering Markus Konz Subglacial Weathering Markus Konz Subglacial Weathering Markus Konz Subglacial Weathering Markus Konz Subglacial Volcanism Hugh Tuffen Subglacial Weathering Markus Konz Subglacial Volcanism Hugh Tuffen Subglacial Volcanism Hu
Snow Skating Ashok Kumar Verma Subglacial Processes Sean Fitzsimons and Reginald Lorrain Snow Skiing Ashok Kumar Verma Subglacial Volcanism Hugh Tuffen Subglacial Weathering A. K. Singh Subglacial Weathering Markus Konz Christopher A. Hiemstra and Glen E. Liston Snow Water Equivalent Michael Durand Submer Accumulation Type Glaciers Nozomu Naito Summer Accumulation Type Glaciers 1107 Snowboard Amit Kumar Super Cooling Clouds Solifluction Stephen J. Walsh and Daniel J. Weiss Supercooled Water Supercooled Water Supercooled Water Simon Cook Supra-Glacial Debris Entrainments Surface Energy Balance 1112 Surface Energy Balance 1112
Snow Skiing Ashok Kumar Verma Subglacial Volcanism Hugh Tuffen Snow Storm A. K. Singh Subglacial Weathering Markus Konz Sublimation from Snow and Ice A. K. Singh Summer Accumulation Type Glaciers A. K. Singh Summer Accumulation Type Glaciers Nozomu Naito Super Cooling Clouds Solifluction Stephen J. Walsh and Daniel J. Weiss Solute in Glacial Meltwaters Martyn Tranter Super-Glacial Debris Entrainments Super-Glacier Ice Renoj Thayyen Suparaclacial Meltwaters Suparaclacial Meltwaters Martyn Tranter Suparaclacial Meltwaters Suparaclacial Debris Entrainments Surface Energy Balance Subglacial Volcanism Hugh Tuffen Subglacial Volcanism Hugh Tuffen Subglacial Volcanism Hugh Tuffen Subglacial Volcanism 1105 Subglacial Volcanism 1105 Markus Konz Sublimation from Snow and Ice A. K. Singh Submarkus Konz Sublimation from Snow and Ice 1106 A. K. Singh Subglacial Volcanism Markus Konz Sublimation from Snow and Ice 1106 A. K. Singh Submarkus Konz Sublimation from Snow and Ice 1106 A. K. Singh Subglacial Volcanism Markus Konz Subglacial Volcanism Markus Konz Sublimation from Snow and Ice 1106 A. K. Singh Submarkus Konz Submar
Snow Storm A. K. Singh Subglacial Weathering Markus Konz Sublimation from Snow and Ice A. K. Singh Subglacial Weathering Markus Konz Sublimation from Snow and Ice A. K. Singh Summer Accumulation Type Glaciers Nozomu Natto Super Cooling Clouds Solifluction Stephen J. Walsh and Daniel J. Weiss Solute in Glacial Meltwaters Martyn Tranter Super-Golacial Debris Entrainments Solutes in Glacier Ice Renoj Thayyen Subglacial Volcanish Markus Tuffen Subglacial Weathering Markus Konz Sublimation from Snow and Ice 1106 A. K. Singh Sublimation from Snow and Ice 1107 Sublimation from Snow and Ice 1108 Subglacial Weathering Markus Konz Sublimation from Snow and Ice 1108 Subglacial Weathering Markus Konz Sublimation from Snow and Ice 1108 Subglacial Volcanish Markus Konz Sublimation from Snow and Ice 1108 Subglacial Volcanish Markus Konz Sublimation from Snow and Ice 1108 Subglacial Volcanish Markus Konz Sublimation from Snow and Ice 1108 Subglacial Volcanish Markus Konz Sublimation from Snow and Ice 1106 A. K. Singh Supprediction Supprediction Subglacial Volcanish Markus Konz Sublimation from Snow and Ice 1106 A. K. Singh Supprediction Suppredi
Snow and Vegetation Interaction Christopher A. Hiemstra and Glen E. Liston Snow Water Equivalent Michael Durand Snowboard Amit Kumar Solifluction Stephen J. Walsh and Daniel J. Weiss Solute in Glacial Meltwaters Martyn Tranter Subgractian Weathering Markus Konz Sublimation from Snow and Ice A. K. Singh Summer Accumulation Type Glaciers Nozomu Naito Super Cooling Clouds Super Cooling Clouds Super Cooling Clouds Supercooled Water Supercooled Water Supercooled Water Simon Cook Supercooled Water Simon Cook Supra-Glacial Debris Entrainments
Snow Water Equivalent Michael Durand Snowboard Amit Kumar Solifluction Stephen J. Walsh and Daniel J. Weiss Solute in Glacial Meltwaters Martyn Tranter Solutes in Glacier Ice Renoj Thayyen Summer Accumulation Type Glaciers Summer Accumulation Type Glaciers 1107 Nozomu Naito Super Cooling Clouds 1108 Supercooled Water Supercooled Water Supercooled Water Supra-Glacial Debris Entrainments 1112 Surface Energy Balance 1112
Michael DurandSummer Accumulation Type Glaciers1107Snowboard1071Nozomu NaitoAmit KumarSuper Cooling Clouds1108Solifluction1071P. Pradeep KumarStephen J. Walsh and Daniel J. WeissSupercooled Water1108Solute in Glacial Meltwaters1074Simon CookMartyn TranterSupra-Glacial Debris Entrainments1112Solutes in Glacier Ice1077D. P. DobhalRenoj ThayyenSurface Energy Balance1112
Amit Kumar Super Cooling Clouds P. Pradeep Kumar Stephen J. Walsh and Daniel J. Weiss Solute in Glacial Meltwaters Martyn Tranter Solutes in Glacier Ice Renoj Thayyen Supercooled Water Supercooled Water Supercooled Water Supercooled Water Supercooled Water Supercooled Water 1108 Supercooled Water Supercooled Water 1108 Supercooled Water 110
Stephen J. Walsh and Daniel J. Weiss Solute in Glacial Meltwaters Martyn Tranter Solutes in Glacier Ice Renoj Thayyen Supra-Glacial Debris Entrainments Supra-Glacial Debris Entrainments 1112 Supra-Glacial Debris Entrainments Supra-Glacial Debris Entrainments 1112
Martyn Tranter Supra-Glacial Debris Entrainments Supra-Glacial Debris Entrainments 1112 Solutes in Glacier Ice Renoj Thayyen Surface Energy Balance 1112
Renoj Thayyen Surface Energy Balance 1112
Specific Melt Rate Pratap Singh Michiel Van den Broeke, Xavier Fettweis and Thomas Mölg
Stable Isotopes Bhishm Kumar Surface Temperature of Snow and Ice Dorothy K. Hall
Stage-Discharge Relationship Amit Kumar 1079 Suspended Sediment Concentration Veerle Vanacker
Stationary Glacier 1081 Suspended Sediment Dynamics 1126 Renoj Thayyen 1081 Suspended Sediment Dynamics 1126
Stratigraphy of Snowpacks Peter W. Nienow and Fay Campbell Suspended Sediment Load Amit Kumar 1132

CONTENTS	xix
----------	-----

	CON	IENIS	XIX
Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) Interferometry for Glacier Movement Studies <i>Y. S. Rao</i>	1133	Topographic Normalization of Multispectral Satellite Imagery Michael P. Bishop and Jeffrey D. Colby	1187
Talik Tingjun Zhang	1143	Transformations of Snow at the Earth's Surface and its Climatic and Environmental Consequences	1197
Tarn Himali Panthri	1144	Florent Domine	1177
Temperate Glaciers Andrew Fountain	1145	Transient Snowline Markus Konz	1204
Temperature Lapse Rates in Glacierized Basins Shawn J. Marshall and Mira Losic	1145	Tree-Ring Indicators of Glacier Fluctuations Dan J. Smith and Lynn Koehler	1205
Temperature Profile of Snowpack Charles Fierz	1151	Tributary Glaciers Hester Jiskoot	1209
Terminus Amit Kumar	1154	Urban Snow Lars Bengtsson and Annette Semádeni-Davies	1211
Terraces Amit Kumar	1155	U-Shape Valley Amit Kumar	1217
Thaw Weakening	1155	Vein Ice Chelamallu Hariprasad	1219
Divya Dudeja Thermal Infrared Sensors	1156	V-Shaped Valley Amit Kumar	1219
Anju Chaudhary Thermal Regime of Ice-Covered Lakes	1157	Water Balance in the Glacierized Region Heidi Escher-Vetter	1221
Thermokarst Debasmita Misra, Ronald P. Daanen and Anita M. Thompson	1158	Westerlies and their Effects on Maritime Ice Caps and Glaciers Robert D. McCulloch	1224
Thinning of Arctic Sea Ice	1166	WGMS (World Glacier Monitoring Service) Wilfried Haeberli	1227
Ron Lindsay Thinning of Glaciers Etienne Berthier	1169	Winter Accumulation Glacier Amit Kumar	1227
Tibetan Plateau	1172	Year-Round Ablation Pattern Rijan B. Kayastha	1229
Tandong Yao, Yongqin Liu, Huabiao Zhao and Wusheng Yu		Younger Dryas Sven Lukas	1229
Tidewater Glaciers Andreas Vieli	1175	List of Articles	1233
Tien Shan Glaciers Vladimir Aizen	1179	Author Index	1239
Till Jan A. Piotrowski	1181	Subject Index	1241

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Preface

Snow, ice and glaciers (SIG) are the components constituting what is called cryosphere. They exist at all latitudes and contain the majority of the earth's fresh water. Due to their dominant prevalence, they influence weather, climate, ecosystems, vegetation, and life and human activities in a variety of ways. Indeed they shape human civilization. Owing to looming climate change and global warming, temperature changes now seem inevitable and are changing the landscape of snow, ice and glaciers, or even the existence thereof. In fact, the changes occurring in SIG can be construed as major indicators of climate change. The nature of cryosphere is highly interdisciplinary and calls for an updated interdisciplinary account of its dynamics. Recent decades have witnessed increasing attention to SIG and scientific communities have started working collectively to develop the basic foundation upon which the broad understanding of cryosphere rests. However, there is still a long way to go.

Discussions on climate change and global warming now seem to be occupying the center stage in public debates, professional forums, news media, and political dialog. As a result, the general public has become much more aware of what is happening to our climate. Since both climate change and climate variability have been found to be closely linked with the cryosphere, it is important for scientists and professionals in the field of earth, environmental, oceanic and atmospheric sciences to develop a better understanding of this sphere from conceptual, theoretical, technical and applied viewpoints. This is especially important for snow, ice and glacier covered areas, since they are rarely stable and are continuously changing in their thickness, areal extent, and flow speeds. Recent advances in field-based studies and quantitative and numerical modeling have provided answers to several key questions but have also highlighted the urgent need for cryospheric studies in many areas, for example, contribution of snow, ice and glacier melt to the sea level rise; importance of snow and glacier to water resources; and so on.

The objective of this Encyclopedia is to present the current state of scientific understanding of various aspects of earth's cryosphere – snow, glaciers, ice caps, ice sheets, ice shelves, sea ice, river and lake ice, and permafrost and their related interdisciplinary connections under one umbrella. Therefore, every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive coverage of cryosphere by including a broad array of topics, such as the atmospheric processes responsible for snow formation; snowfall observations; snow cover and snow surveys; transformation of snow to ice and changes in their properties; classification of ice and glaciers and their worldwide distribution; glaciation and ice ages; glacier dynamics; glacier surface and subsurface characteristics; geomorphic processes and landscape formation; hydrology and sedimentary systems; hydrochemical and isotopic properties; permafrost modeling; hazards caused by cryospheric changes; trends of glacier retreat on a global scale along with the impact of climate change; and many more quantitative estimates of various glacier parameters, such as degree-day, mass balance, extent and volume, and downwasting. Also included are articles on GPS application, and satellite image application in glaciology; GPR analysis; and sea level rise.

For purposes of the Encyclopedia 463 articles were selected. Literature on snow, ice and glaciers has grown too large to be fully treated in a single volume; therefore, the selection of articles included some subjectivity but was reviewed by many experts who have long been at the forefront of research in the field of cryosphere. We truly understand that given the scope of this subject it is almost impossible to include each and every topic in this type of reference book, but we have tried our best to avoid any glaring omissions or miss something which could significantly hamper the quality of the Encyclopedia. Therefore, we have made the contents of the Encyclopedia exhaustive, but we understand that we might have missed certain topics. We are also aware of some partial omissions. As it frequently happens, willing contributors

xlii PREFACE

cannot unfortunately be always found for all the suggested topics. It may be noted that if the reader does not see an entry for the particular topic that interests him or her, then he or she should look in the index because that topic may have been covered under a different heading and perhaps in more than one article. In making the list exhaustive, it is possible that there might be a little bit of repetition here and there, but we do not want readers to read two articles to understand one.

The material presented in the articles consists of established information on a particular topic and represents easily accessible digested knowledge. The level of material is such that a graduate student can benefit from the presentation which is not necessarily from his or her area of expertise. An effort has been made such that each article stands on its own, without an assumption that a reader will be seeing any other portion of the Encyclopedia. Although entries are presented in alphabetical order, they have been organized under major compilation headings which should become particularly obvious when the reader uses the cross-references with each entry. This is not an exhaustive list but hopefully it gives a structure to the Encyclopedia's contents. Of equal value are the many references given with the entries.

This Encyclopedia of Snow, Ice and Glaciers is supposed to provide clear explanations of current topics, and is not structured as a student textbook, but it is rather for quick access to particular terms and concepts in self-contained entries. We hope that this volume will also tempt the casual reader to browse through and become curious about the different facets and foci of cryosphere.

The contributors represent varying backgrounds and many of them represent WHO'S WHO in the cryosphere. It is hoped that the Encyclopedia will serve as a reference to scholars and students. The Encyclopedia will also be a valuable resource for geologists, geographers, climatologists, hydrologists, and water resources engineers; as well as to those who are engaged in the practice of agricultural and civil engineering, earth sciences, environmental sciences and engineering, ecosystems management, and other relevant fields.

The encyclopedia is comprised of articles under three categories: A, B, and C. Tables 1, 2 and 3 provide a list of major headings of articles included in the encyclopedia for a quick reference (see List of Articles, pages 1233–1237). 64 articles in category A represent major divisions and review topics. These also serve to coordinate the widely scattered entries of categories B and C. 182 Category B articles constitute building block items, inspired by textbook subheads, but also the cookbook items. 217 articles in category C are mini-entries dealing with materials, fancy terms, or outdated concepts. All these categorical entries on different topics are compiled in an alphabetical order, with their length being related to their relative importance.

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Vijay P. Singh Pratap Singh Umesh K. Haritashya (Editors-in-Chief)

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Guide to the Reader

For the beginners, it is good to start with a general article, then track the list of cross-references provided at the end of the article to locate similar or relevant articles. For example, if one wants to learn about hydrological aspects of snow and glaciers, then one should go to Glacier Hydrology and Snow Hydrology, then Melt Runoff Modeling, then Impacts of Snow and Glaciers on Runoff, then Hydrochemical Characteristics of Snow, Ice and Glaciers, then Hydropower: Hydroelectric Power Generation from Alpine Glacier Melt, or several other specific Snow or Glacier Hydrology related articles. The list of cross-references provided at the end of the article is not exhaustive, otherwise it would lead to a long listing, rather it is a guide for the reader to find other relevant articles, which are further cross-referenced.

Experts or other readers with background in cryosphere may directly search for specific topics. For example, Ice Age Cycles: Data, Models, and Uncertainties, or Basal Sediment Evacuation by Subglacial Drainage Systems. If one does not find the topic one is looking for, it is possible that it may have been covered under a different heading. Therefore, one should go to the index that would lead to the articles that may cover the topic of interest. If a reader is looking for more explanation than what is already described under any particular topic, then most articles provide important and landmark bibliographic references that relate to both general and research articles. Some articles provide older references which allow readers to find the historical aspect of the topic.

FJORDS 293

As depth increases, firn porosity decreases and air mixing becomes more restricted (Schwander et al., 1997; Bender et al., 1997). Seasonal layering can also affect the rate of air movement through firn (Albert, 1996) and may produce impermeable layers in the non-diffusive zone. These prevent air from equilibrating with that in the diffusive zone (Sowers et al., 1992; Schwander et al., 1997). While air may mix locally, within the summer layer for example, impermeable winter layers impede its vertical diffusion (Fain et al., 2008).

Firn measurements

Borehole logging is used to measure firn properties in situ. These include temperature, density, and vertical strain. Unlike snow, which must be sampled at depth by digging a large snow pit and sampling from the sides, firn has enough cohesion (Cohesion) to permit the extraction of intact cores that are used to measure density, porosity and permeability, grain size, and anisotropy.

Because firn is compressible, seasonal layers thin with depth. It is also porous and subject to the migration of chemical species deposited with the snow (Chemical Composition of Snow, Ice, and Glaciers). Both of these aspects can complicate age-depth calculations. Where annual layers cannot be distinguished optically or from the geochemical record, a density profile produced from a borehole log of vertical strain or measurements of mass, length, and diameter of core sections can reveal seasonal layering.

Summary

A transitional state between fallen snow and meteoric ice, firn is a complex material where vast morphological and chemical changes are taking place.

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Cross-references

Antarctica

Chemical and Microbe Records in Snow and Ice Chemical Composition of Snow, Ice, and Glaciers

Cohesion

Geochemistry of Snow and Ice

Glacier

Ice

Isotopic Characteristics of Ice, Snow, and Glaciers

Layering of Snow

Overburden Pressure

Snow Grains

Stratigraphy of Snowpacks

Temperate Glaciers

FJORDS

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Synonyms

Fiord

Definition

Fjords are long, narrow, and over-deepened features with steep sides and are carved into bedrock by the glacial activity and flooded by melting water (Figure 1).

294 FJORDS



Fjords, Figure 1 Fjord as seen in Milford Sound, New Zealand. Photo courtesy Dr. Luke Copland.

Fjords are erosional landforms that represent the movement of a glacier within a confined channel along the valley bottom. The movement of a glacier and formation of fjords is entirely controlled by topography. They are common in the polar regions, but can also be found in subpolar and temperate regions (Table 1). Fjords have existed for millions of years and they range from a few kilometers to several tens of kilometers wide and several kilometers long. Because of their location and relationship with the sea level on one side and tectonically active high mountains on the other side, they are an important feature. They also possess unique characteristics of oceanic processes and ice-ocean interface (Straneo et al., 2010), and therefore, they are appropriately termed as one of the complex and dynamic landsystems that provide information about glacial, fluvial, and oceanographic features.

Most fjords are a Palimpsest feature which makes them an extremely important feature, because they can provide information about the successive glaciations through floor sediments. However, these sediments need to be carefully analyzed, since they may have been buried by younger glacimarine sediments. Fjords act as natural sediment traps and typically have high sediment accumulation rates, providing the potential for high-resolution palaeoclimatic and palaeoenvironmental studies on decadal to centennial timescales and presenting a unique opportunity to study land-ocean interactions. Cowan et al. (2010) used the fjord sediment to identify two prominent glacial erosion surfaces associated with Last Glacial Maximum advance and Little Ice Age advance. Fjords comprise several rock basins, but many of them are deepest at the beginning and become gradually shallower toward the sea. This could be related to the erosive power of glaciers, which becomes lesser and lesser toward the end of the feature.

Sediment deposition in fjords can be related to retreating glaciers by depositional zones moving in the upward direction and hiatuses in retreat by push moraines or morainal banks. Powell and Molnia (1989) has shown various depositional system models associated with retreating glaciers, and he (Powell, 2003) has discussed such models in various types of environment from polar to temperate. Sediment deposition can also be related to advancing glaciers in the form of increasing till thickness from head of a fjord toward the sea limit.

Fjords also provide critical information about marine limits and relate to with the isostaic uplift of deglaciated outer coasts.

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Cross-references

Sediment Core and Glacial Environment Reconstruction

FJORDS 295

Fjords, Table 1 Some of the major local controls on modern fjord landsystems (Adopted from Powell, 2003)

						Sedin	Sediment contribution	ıtributi	on							
	Closical	[00000+01				Glacial		Glacifl	Glacifluvial Marine	Marine			Terrestrial	ial		, in
Climatic zone	Glaciai flow velocity	Gracial internal flow ice Bed velocity condition condition	Bed condition	Subglacial water free	En-/ En-/ Sea Glacier terminus Sub- supra Sub- supra icebergs ice	Sub-	En-/ supra	-qnS	En-/ supra i	cebergs	Sea ice l	Mass biogenic Fluvial flow	Fluvial	Mass flow	Wind	Wind Modern examples
Temperate Fast	Fast	Temperate	Temperate Deforming Conduit	Conduit	Tidewater cliff	2	2	5	1	61		1	3	3	1	Alaska, British
Subpolar Fast	Fast	Slightly cold	un, iocai now Deforming Conduit till flow	Llow Conduit flow	Tidewater cliff	8	-	3		_	7	1	8		-	Svalbard, Chile Canadian and
	Moderate Cold		Mostly frozen, local till	None to minor conduit	Short floating tongue or tidewater cliff	2		2		_	,	2			-	Aussian Arcuc Antarctic Peninsula
Polar	Fast	Cold	Deforming till	\dashv	Floating tongue	κ		κ	V-1	~	_	1	2			Greenland, Ellesmere Island, Baffin
	Moderate	Very cold	Moderate Very cold Deforming None	None	Floating tongue	ϵ	1				_	_	-	-	ж	Antarctica
	Slow	Very cold Mostly frozen, some ti	Mostly frozen, some till	None	Floating tongue or tidewater cliff	-	-			_	_	_		П	ю	(Mackay) Antarctica (Ferrar and Blue)