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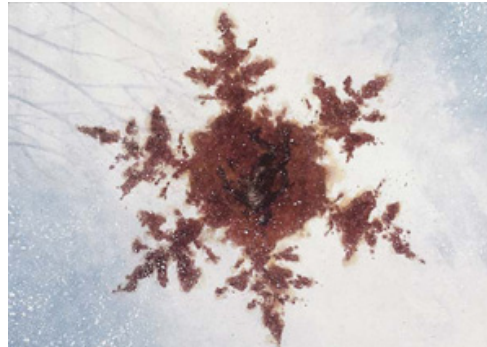


I Freeze, Therefore I Am

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Taste the Magic
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It is said that the indigenous peoples of the North American Arctic regions have more than a hundred different words for snow. There's a word for light, crystalline snow, and one for heavy wet snow. There are words for the crust-like snow on the top and the downy puff beneath. There are words for all of it. But something tells me that even the most verbose would not have a word for the snow that comes to life in the form of a bird-creature-thing, or for snow that is comprised not of frozen water but of frozen magic. Well move over igloo-dwellers, because we have a word for these! It's called...SNOW!



I wonder if they have a word for this kind of snow?

While the word itself seems pretty ho-hum, there is a lot to it beyond these four obvious letters. While the *Ice Age* creative folks found it acceptable to have just one kind of snow, we decided to take it a step further and make all sorts of snow cards. Once the rules issues were hammered out, it seemed to be an easy decision to make: all permanent types could be "snow" permanents. It was an easy decision for the card designers, but it was not so easy for the Creative team to deal with.

It was important to us to have a "rime" to the reason (pardon the pun—it was too fat to pass up). What is "snow"? How could enchantments be "snow"? What made creatures or artifacts "snow"? How did they get that way? Why didn't it happen 20 years earlier during the original *Ice Age*? As it turned out, the answers to these questions blended in really well with big picture decisions we had already made about *Coldsnap*.

The big question, "What is "snow" found its answer in the big decision to have a quick and unnatural return of magical winter. "Snow" would end up being the word that describes something that is "touched" by the powerful Rimewind ice magic that threw the blanket of winter back over Terisiare. "Wow, that was easy," we thought. Well, nothing is ever that easy. Snow cards had to mingle functionally with the Snow-Covered Land cards of *Ice Age*. So it seemed like we needed a way to have Snow cards that were not necessarily a direct product of Rimewind magic. After a few days of frozen vigil inside a hollowed out ice cave, we found the answer, and it is hinted at in the flavor text of *Boreal Druid*.

Some creatures are bound to the cold by Rimewind magic. Others seek it out, adapted by two thousand years of the Ice. The Boreal, where Heidar's frigid sway is strongest, is home to both.

While this flavor text speaks specifically about snow creatures, the thought behind it can apply to other permanents as well. There are two basic ways in which something can become "Snow."

1. An evolutionary adaptation to icy conditions can take place after hundreds or even thousands of years of cold. In that much time creatures can change biologically to adapt and land can change its natural patterns and cycles to accommodate a permanent winter. Unnatural items like artifacts or enchantments would not make this natural transformation. They would fall into category 2.
2. A creature, item, spell, or place can be altered, either directly or indirectly, by Rimewind magic. Some might become "Snow" because their nesting ground is too close to the Boreal, and the magical emanations from Rimewind keep mingle into their being and warp them over time. Others could be sought out by Rimewind wizards and purposely transformed by their magic.

Let's have a peek at some of *Coldsnap*'s snow stuff and see how they fit into these two categories. Let's start with the guy who brought us the flavor text above, *Boreal Druid*.

The answer to *Boreal Druid*'s snow origin does not need to come from me. It's right there on the card, in the top left corner. The Boreal is the vast circular area radiating out from Rimewind keep, a region that stayed magically frozen even through the Thaw. The beings that happened to live there, or even just make a temporary encampment, could be affected by the keep's magic. I would guess that this is what happened to the Druid, since elves usually make their homes in the Southeast, near Yavimaya. But, it is also possible that, once these elves were changed, they decided to remain in the Boreal, where their new ability to draw mana from the ice is most effective. One could also theorize that elves, whose life spans are so long,

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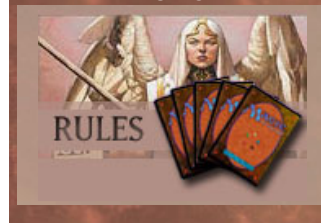
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could not go through enough generations to allow for much evolutionary change. This being the case, they would have to be magically altered.

Boreal Griffin, **Boreal Centaur**, and **Boreal Shelf** were all affected this same way.



The **Thermopod** is a great example of a creature that evolved to thrive specifically in the cold. After many generations and many subtle genetic tweaks, this species has become well suited for survival on the icy flats of Terisiare.

Slicking the ice with its heated underside, the thermopod skates at great speed to overtake its prey.

The creature has evolved its heated blood and vascular system, converting from just a red mana source to also become a method of improving its movement in its natural habitat. If this thing was not a mindless slug-beast, it would be really bummed out if the Thaw returns. I guess it would have to start evolving again into some sort of giant mudskimmer. Maybe we'll see that in another 2000 years.



There are plenty of other naturally evolved snow creatures in *Coldsnap*: **Karplusan Wolverine**, **Ronom Serpent**, **Ohran Viper**, and the yetis, **Stalking Yeti** and **Ohran Yeti**. There are probably others, but these are the ones I could crank off the top of my ear-muffled head.

In addition to these snow creatures, there are plenty of snow lands that fall into this category. All of the Snow-Covered lands do, as well as most of the *Coldsnap* dual lands; **Highland Weald**, **Frost Marsh**, and **Arctic Flats**. **Dark Depths** is another one. It took but a few months of immortal slumber for the demigod Marit Lage to be frozen beneath a thick, clear sheet of ice. Worry not, little leviathan, your icy covers may soon be coming off!



Lastly, there are the snow things that became that way on purpose. Most obvious of these are the spells and artifacts imbued with the power of ice magic by **Heidar** and his twisted coven of cryomancers. **Rime Transfusion** and **Gelid Shackles** are spells developed by Rimewind to further their fiendish goals, and anything they make is bound to be 1% inspiration, 0% perspiration, and 99% refrigeration. **Coldsteel Heart**, similarly, was created by them to be like a little frozen battery pack that would power the dormant Phyrexian death machines found beneath the ice of Ronom Glacier. In using the **Coldsteel Heart** (and some other magical shenanigans) to awaken them, the Phyrexian artifact creatures also became "snow."

Side note, **Phyrexian Ironfoot** is my favorite art in the set. Awesome! Click the picture for a gift from me to you. You're welcome.

What else did Heidar and friends twist into snow minions? **Rimescale Dragon**, **Blizzard Specter**, **Zombie Musher**, **Rimebound Dead**. In fact, you can read about the creation of **Rimebound Dead** right on their own flavor text:

*"Tresserhorn is ours now. Dredge the lake and bring me all the bones you find. We'll build you a new army, the likes of which Terisiare has never seen."
—Heidar, Rimewind master, to Haakon*

This brings up the subject of Rimewind-twisted lands. If you look back up to the paragraph about naturally “snow” lands, you’ll see that **Tresserhorn Sinks** is conspicuously missing. That’s because Heidar sunk his clutches in there in order to help create Haakon’s army (and to butter him up and gain access to Tresserhorn’s secret dungeon library)! The Sinks are not the only land to be turned by the Rimewind. **Mouth of Ronom** and **Scrying Sheets** were also infused with the essence of cryomancy. The **Scrying Sheets** were created specifically for divining purposes, but the **Mouth of Ronom** was a pre-existing landform that just needed a little magical nudge to turn it into a great icy killing jaw. You know, Heidar is a wacko, but he does have some pretty cool ideas.



I encourage you to have a spin through *Coldsnap* and theorize about how the other snow cards got their flakes. In all, there are 46 snow cards in the set. Buried in the cards and in the supporting *Coldsnap* story material are the answers for each of these cards. What we do not have, however, are answers to why some non-snow cards are not snow cards. Even before the Rimewind wizards started flinging their icy spells all over the continent, Terisiare had experienced 2000 years of unending bitter winter. That is plenty of time for creatures and lands to start adapting and evolving to “snow.” Just for kicks, here are some of the cards I think should be reverse-engineered to be snow. We will call this “Cavotta-Errata.” (The term, ironically, not coined by me. It’s a Doug Beyer special that I will continue to use as long as Vorthos is alive in my soul.)

- **Drelnoch** (This one I can only blame on us. All the Yetis should have been snow creatures.)
- **Adarkar Unicorn**
- **Arctic Foxes**
- **Glacial Wall**
- **Goblin Ski Patrol**
- **Goblin Snowman** (If this isn’t, then I don’t know what is.)
- **Karplusan Giant**
- **Karplusan Yeti**
- **Rime Dryad** (How perfect is that!? RIME Dryad!)
- **Kjeldoran Frostbeast**
- **Glacial Chasm**
- **Ice Floe**
- **Drift of the Dead**

While we’re at it, let’s just see what else might have been snow - if Heidar decided to get cranky ten years earlier:

- **Glaciers**
- **Cold Snap** (Aw, come on now!)
- **Snowfall**
- **Snow Devil**
- **Iceberg**
- **Icy Prison**
- **Glacial Crevasses**
- **Snowblind**
- **Blizzard**

Okay, I need another hot chocolate. My mitts are frozen and, well, anytime is a good time for chocolate. See you next week.

*Matt Cavotta has always been a fantasy goober. At various points in his gooberhood, he has used his nerdy knowledge to become a professional goober. He went from scribbling pictures of his own **D&D** characters to illustrating books and cards for his two favorite games; **D&D** and **Magic**. Then he channeled his inner 7th level Illusionist/3rd level Bard and landed himself a job at Wizards as a writer. He continues to cast his illusion spells each morning, lest they find out he’s just another goober.*



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