



by Cindy Steele

## ***Sensational Snowflakes!***

Welcome back to Puddles' Craft Corner. It's January! It's that time when we think about the cold weather, and that means thinking about things like building snowmen, snowball fights, snow angels...in other words – SNOW! Here in the North Texas/Southern Oklahoma area we usually don't see snow until January or February, if we even see snow at all. We might be making paper snowflakes at school or at home, dreaming of waking up to a snowy wonderland.



When we do get snow, it's a magical experience...especially out at Hagerman NWR. If you happen to be out at the refuge during or after a snow, the whole refuge takes on a different sound and look and the animals are out in abundance enjoying the cold.





Hagerman Visitor Center During a Snowstorm

Since most kids in January are dreaming of snow...and snow days off from school, let's learn a little bit about snow before we dig into a fun craft.

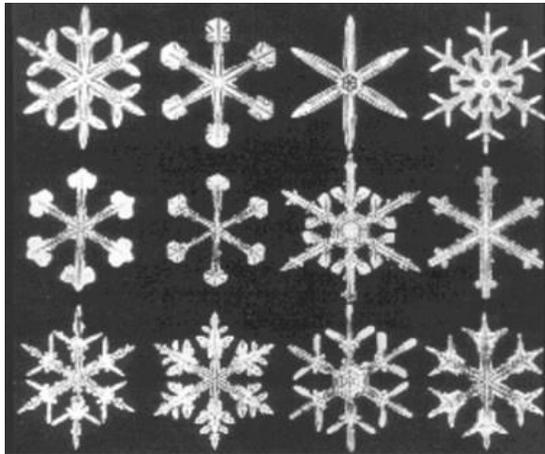
### **How Are Snowflakes Formed?**

To understand how snow forms, we have to know a little bit about why it rains. When water becomes warm, it evaporates as water vapor into the air, forming clouds. When it cools again above our heads the vapor turns back to water and rain falls back down to the ground. When it's really cold, the water vapor freezes into crystals, usually around a particle of dust in the cloud. As this tiny particle of ice moves through the clouds, more water vapor freezes to it. Eventually, this process creates a snowflake that is heavy enough to fall from the clouds to the earth. If it's cold and dry on the ground, the snow won't melt. Instead, each flake of snow will land on top of the other, causing the snow to build and cover the ground.

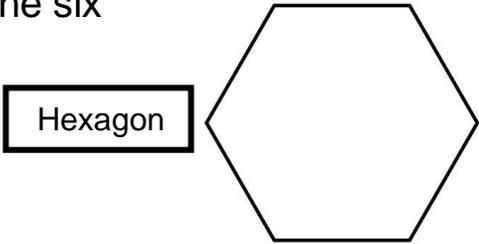
### **Did You Know That All Snowflakes Are Six-Pointed?**

Snowflakes are made up of many of these tiny frozen crystals. Usually, one of these snowflakes is made up of about 200 of these connected ice crystals. Snowflakes are made up of six sides and six points. Because of the way they

stick together, the frozen droplets make a shape with six sides. Each one of these six-sided shapes is called a snow crystal. As more and more droplets stick to the snow crystal, they start sticking to the six corners more than other places, so the crystal grows six 'arms.' Slowly, more and more water droplets get attached to the arms in different patterns. These snow crystals are what make up snowflakes. This beautiful six-sided structure comes from the hexagonal structure of ice. When water freezes, the tiny molecules stick together and always form a six-sided hexagon. As more and more molecules stick together, they form branches on each of the six sides.



Several Different Snowflake Forms  
All With Six Points



### **Is Every Snowflake Uniquely Different?**

Even if you looked all day, you wouldn't find two snowflakes or snow crystals that are exactly the same. Every single one is different. Let's see why. Each ice crystal has a unique path to the ground. They will float through different clouds of different temperatures and different levels of moisture, which means the ice crystals will grow in unique ways.

[Click Here to See How a Snowflake Forms](#)

## **Is Snow Really White?**

Snow is not actually white, but clear. It looks white because of the way the light reflects off of the ice crystals.



## **Fun Snow Facts!**

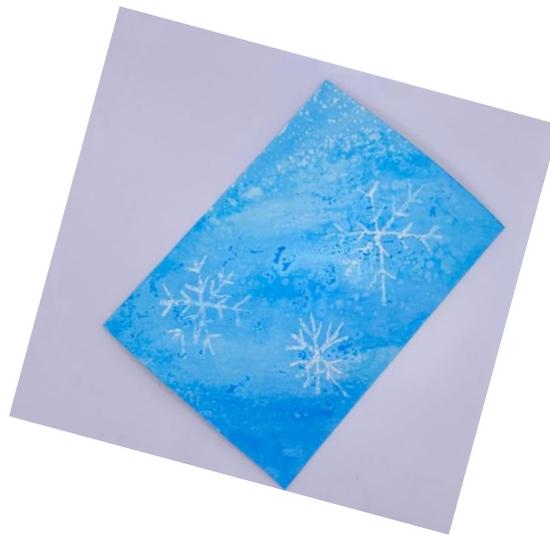
- Snow at the North and South Poles reflect heat into space. The snow acts like a mirror from the sun. The light bounces off of the snow and travels into space.
- The most snowfall over a year was in Mount Rainier in the state of Washington. It snowed 1,224 inches from February 19th, 1971- February 19th, 1972.
- The most snow to fall in a 24-hour period was 76 inches in Silver Lake Colorado in 1921.
- The largest snowman was 122 feet tall. It was built-in Maine in 2008.
- The largest snow sculpture ever built was in Heilongjiang Province China in 2008. It was 656 feet long and 115 feet tall. It took 600 sculptors from 40 countries to build it.
- The snowiest place in the US is Stampede Pass in Washington State. On Average, it snows 430 inches a year.
- The most popular activity for kids to do in the snow is to build a snowman!



Puddles, the Blue Goose, is excited to share a fun snowy art craft! Hands-on activities are some of the best ways for kids to learn about something. Hands-on activities allow children to use their senses while learning. They see, touch, and move real objects to complete tasks. This means that science, nature, and more are amazingly brought to life! Children begin to understand the meaning behind what they are doing.

Now, let's gather up some simple materials to create our very own snowflake! Then, let's hope for a little bit of snow this January!

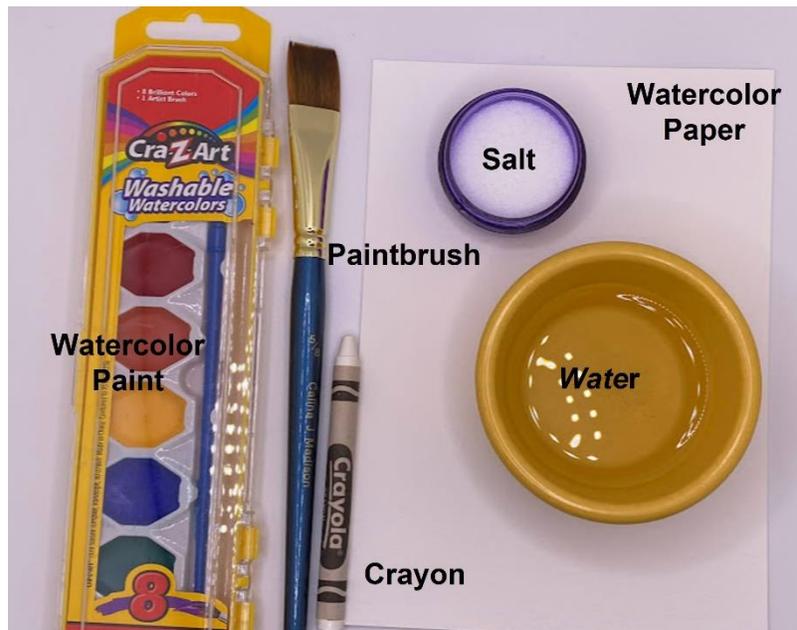
## Snowflake Craft



## Materials

1. A piece of watercolor paper or thick cardstock
2. Blue watercolor paint
3. A white crayon
4. One paintbrush
5. Table salt

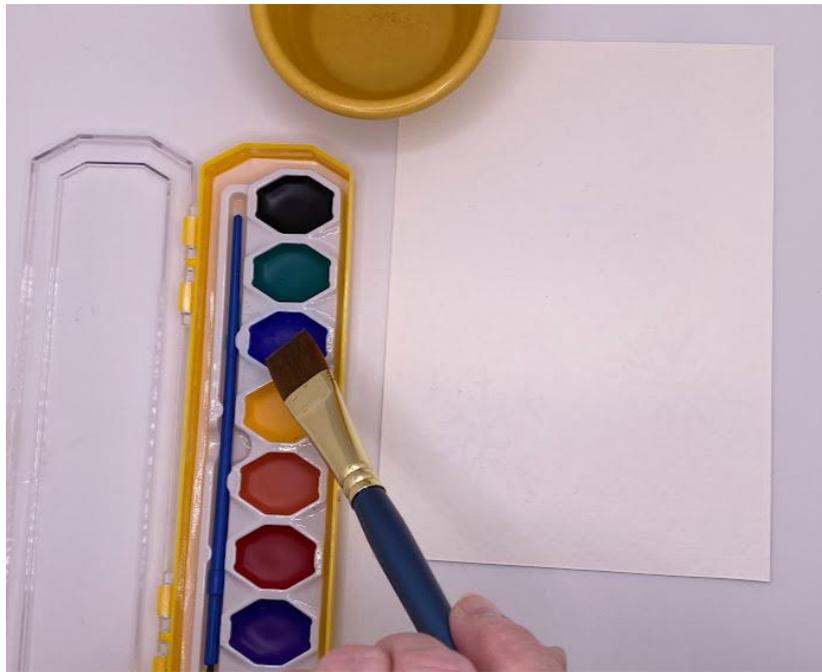
1. Gather all materials.



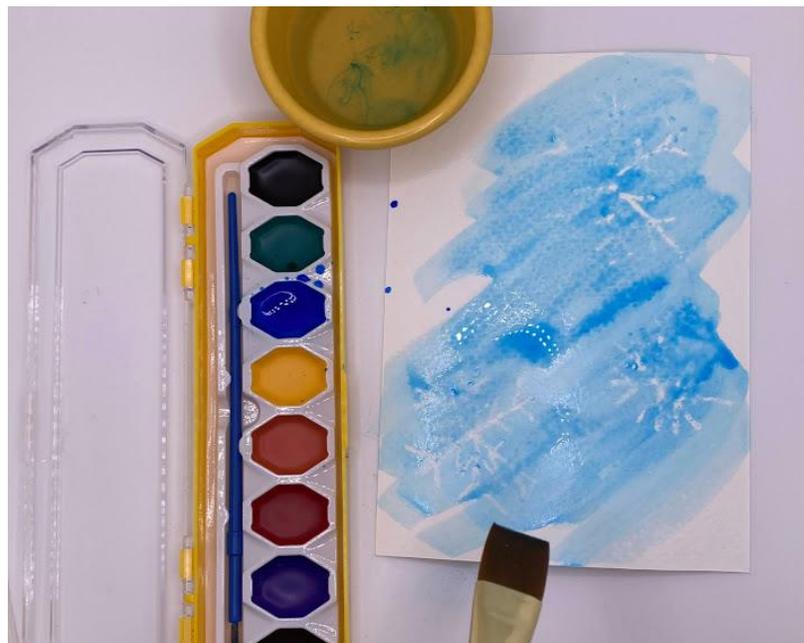
2. Draw snowflakes on the watercolor paper with a white crayon. You may have to hold the paper in the light to see the snowflake that you're drawing on. \*Be sure to make six points on the snowflake



3. Wet the paint brush with water and get the blue watercolor paint wet.



4. Paint across the paper with the blue watercolor paint. Add more water and watercolor paint to the brush as needed. \*It works best to paint in one direction across the complete paper.



5. While the paint is still wet, sprinkle a small amount of salt over the picture. The salt will absorb some of the water to leave whiter spots that look like snowfall.



Now, let your original painting dry! You can wipe off the salt or leave it on if you wish.



If you would like to take this one step further and learn more about magical snowflakes while reading a charming children's book, here are some terrific books with beautiful artwork:

*Snowmen at Night* by Caralyn Buehner

*Snowflake Bentley* by Jacqueline Briggs Martin

*The Story of Snow* by Jon Nelson

*Curious About Snow* by Gina Shaw

*Little Owl's Snow* by Divya Srinivasan



Puddles is excited for the wintertime at Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge is full of birds in February. Come back next month to see a fun craft about the cardinals who winter at Hagerman.