Snowflakes might revolutionize weather forecasting

By Laura Dattaro, Weather Channel

When it snows in Utah, Tim Garrett likes to watch the storm. He looks outside, watching the blurry mess of white fill the window, the Wasatch Mountains in the background. But he also looks at his computer screen, where he sees a live feed of photographs of tiny, individual snowflakes, each shot from three different angles as it makes its way to the ground.

Garrett is a University of Utah physicist who founded the Alta Project, an effort to photograph falling snowflakes in real-time to help improve models used to forecast winter storms. Along with a student at the university, Garrett developed the Multi-Angle Snowflake Camera (MASC), which, so far, has taken millions of photos of snowflakes at the Alta Ski Resort, along with data on how fast the flakes fall.

"This is an instrument that I think is revealing an aspect of nature in a way that it has not been seen before," Garrett told weather.com. "I mean for me, what we're seeing is astounding. I really did not appreciate the variety of what is out there until we actually started measuring it."

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