

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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COMPOUND DUST WHIRLS

Whirling columns of dust are a familiar sight in warm weather on dry roads, plains and deserts. Occasionally several of these whirls are seen to belong to a revolving system; i.e., each whirl rotates on its axis and at the same time they all revolve around a common center. In his well-known description of dust storms in India, P.F.H. Baddeley writes:

"A curious phenomenon often observed is a slowly moving whirlwind; instead of appearing as a single column, the dust whirl in contact with the ground and for a few feet upward is found to be composed of several distinct vortices, or spiral bodies, each one rotating on its axis as it revolves round and round the whirling circle. This remarkable sight gives the idea of a fairy dance round a ring, and the motions are, from all accounts, imitated by the dancing dervishes of Turkey; one of their holy exercises being to whirl round and round like a top, singly, or in company with several others, performing at the same time a gyration in a circle, as if their dance originated in the very phenomenon just described."

Multiple ^{waterspouts} " " behaving in a similar manner were observed a few years ago off the coast of Cuba from the British steamship "Carston". In this case some large spouts were seen, each of which had a few slender spouts revolving around it, like satellites revolving around a planet.

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