

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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NEGLECTED DUST WHIRLS

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Authority on Meteorology

Innumerable little dust whirlwinds waltzed over the drought-stricken interior of our continent last year and early this year. Western Americans often call these revolving dust columns "twisters," while in British India and South Africa they are generally known as "devils." It is astonishing that our recent dust epidemic did not yield numerous spectacular photographs and detailed descriptions of them. The only photograph that has come to my notice is one of little interest, taken in New Mexico and published in the English journal Discovery for August, 1935. Why did our news photographers neglect their opportunity?

Dust whirls sometimes perform queer evolutions and are worth a great deal more attention than they have generally received. A complex whirl seen on a desert plain in New Mexico was described in 1885 in the American Meteorological Journal. About twelve simple whirls, each turning on its own axis, were in a circle of about ten rods diameter and they were all turning around a common center. The motion in the individual whirls was decidedly more rapid than that of the system as a whole. The dust rose to a height of 75 to 100 feet.

Similar multiple whirls have often been reported from India, and groups of waterspouts have sometimes been seen to behave in the same fashion.

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