# Rare dust devil in Barrhead sparks local awe and challenges tornado myths



In a remarkable display of nature, a swirling phenomenon that many initially mistook for a tornado was captured on video over a residential estate in Barrhead, East Renfrewshire, near Glasgow. Footage shared by avid hiker Eddie Bonnie on TikTok has drawn widespread attention, showcasing what the Met Office later identified as a dust devil. The incident occurred around 4:30 PM on Thursday, May 22, and has left local residents both astonished and curious.

A dust devil is a specific type of wind vortex, often visually striking, which differs significantly from tornadoes, despite superficial similarities. These swirling columns of dust typically form on warm, dry days when the ground heats unevenly, creating strong updrafts. This process leads to an upward mobile vortex, capable of reaching heights from a few feet to over 1,000 feet. Dust devils are primarily found in semi-arid and desert regions, making their appearance in Scotland a rare and unexpected spectacle. The phenomenon, while generally harmless, has on occasion caused injuries or property damage. Notably, an incident in East El Paso, Texas, where a bouncy castle was lifted ten feet into the air by a dust devil, highlights the potential dangers, albeit infrequently.

Reaction from locals reaffirmed the astonishing nature of the occurrence, with many commenting on Bonnie's video. One individual recalled their daughter's description of a "mini tornado" at school, initially thought to be a whimsical exaggeration, now seemingly validated. Another observer noted the eerie experience of driving through the swirling dust on a nearby road, describing it as "like a dust tornado." The combination of curiosity and disbelief in the community illustrates the unique character of this rare meteorological event.

The impact of dust devils, although generally benign, can sometimes escalate to surprising extremes, particularly in well-formed examples. Meteorological studies indicate that larger dust devils can generate wind speeds exceeding 60 mph, equivalent to a strong thunderstorm's wind, which enhances their capacity to lift and transport various debris. In light of such potential, meteorologists always urge caution when these phenomena occur, as the unpredictable nature can lead to unexpected challenges.

Dust devils have garnered attention globally, with different regions encountering them under distinct circumstances. They are most prevalent in hot climates, particularly during the late spring and summer months. Despite being commonly associated with the arid landscapes of the southwestern United States, dust devils can and do manifest in less typical locales, as evidenced by the recent sighting in Scotland. This incident in Barrhead not only exemplifies the unpredictability of weather patterns but also encourages a wider conversation about the awareness and understanding of such natural occurrences.

Locals may well remember the Barrhead dust devil as a striking addition to Scotland's atmospheric tapestry, underscoring the randomness of weather and its ability to surprise even in the most familiar settings.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/huge-tornado-captured-over-scots-35285257)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.weather.gov/fgz/DustDevil), [[3]](https://weather.metoffice.gov.uk/learn-about/weather/types-of-weather/wind/willy-willy), [[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dust_devil)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/huge-tornado-captured-over-scots-35285257), [[3]](https://weather.metoffice.gov.uk/learn-about/weather/types-of-weather/wind/willy-willy), [[5]](https://kvia.com/news/top-stories/2022/06/10/hypnotizing-dust-devil-caught-on-camera-in-far-east-el-paso/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.weather.gov/fgz/DustDevil), [[3]](https://weather.metoffice.gov.uk/learn-about/weather/types-of-weather/wind/willy-willy), [[6]](https://www.gi.alaska.edu/alaska-science-forum/dust-devils)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/huge-tornado-captured-over-scots-35285257), [[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dust_devil), [[7]](https://www.weareiowa.com/article/weather/weather-lab/dust-devils-how-do-dust-devils-form-what-are-dust-devils/524-14898f51-d062-46d7-86e2-d87061d4b847)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/huge-tornado-captured-over-scots-35285257> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.weather.gov/fgz/DustDevil> - This article from the National Weather Service explains dust devils as common wind phenomena occurring worldwide, including Arizona. It describes their formation due to strong surface heating, leading to dust-filled vortices. Dust devils typically range from 10 to 300 feet in diameter and can reach heights of approximately 500 to 1,000 feet. While generally harmless, they can cause damage, with wind speeds in larger dust devils reaching 60 mph or greater. The article also notes that dust devils can form in northern Arizona, especially during May and June, and can last from a few minutes to over an hour.
3. <https://weather.metoffice.gov.uk/learn-about/weather/types-of-weather/wind/willy-willy> - The UK Met Office provides information on 'willy willy,' also known as dust devils. These are upward spiraling, dust-filled vortices that can vary in height from a few feet to over 1,000 feet. They primarily occur in desert and semi-arid areas where the ground is dry, and high surface temperatures produce strong updrafts. Unlike tornadoes, dust devils grow upwards from the ground rather than down from clouds. They usually last only a few minutes before dissipating. The article also mentions rare incidents where dust devils have caused property damage and injuries, such as the Coconino County Fairgrounds event in 2000 and an incident in East El Paso, Texas, where a bouncy castle was lifted by a dust devil.
4. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dust_devil> - This Wikipedia article provides a comprehensive overview of dust devils, describing them as strong, well-formed, and relatively short-lived whirlwinds. Their size ranges from small (18 inches wide and a few yards tall) to large (more than 30 feet wide and more than half a mile tall). Dust devils form when a pocket of hot air near the surface rises quickly through cooler air above it, creating an updraft. If conditions are right, the updraft may begin to rotate, leading to the formation of a dust devil. The article also notes that while most dust devils are harmless, rare, severe dust devils have caused damage and even deaths in the past. For example, a dust devil struck the Coconino County Fairgrounds in Flagstaff, Arizona, on September 14, 2000, causing extensive damage and several injuries.
5. <https://kvia.com/news/top-stories/2022/06/10/hypnotizing-dust-devil-caught-on-camera-in-far-east-el-paso/> - This news article from KVIA reports on a mesmerizing dust devil captured on camera in east El Paso, Texas. The video shows a dust devil forming and dissipating, highlighting the phenomenon's visual appeal. The article provides a brief overview of dust devils, noting that they are rotating columns of wind that form when the sun unevenly heats the ground, creating an unstable environment that causes air to rise. While most dust devils aren't powerful enough to cause damage, the strongest ones can produce over 60 mph winds.
6. <https://www.gi.alaska.edu/alaska-science-forum/dust-devils> - This article from the Geophysical Institute at the University of Alaska Fairbanks explains the formation of dust devils. It describes how a sudden uprush of hot air causes air to speed horizontally inward to the bottom of the newly forming funnel, leading to the development of a dust devil. The article notes that dust devils can last from less than a minute up to several hours, with air speeds up to 70 mph measured in vigorous dust devils. This enables them to pick up dust, leaves, or sometimes larger objects. Dust devils tend to form in groups, with a large dust devil sometimes having shorter-lived devils traveling along behind it.
7. <https://www.weareiowa.com/article/weather/weather-lab/dust-devils-how-do-dust-devils-form-what-are-dust-devils/524-14898f51-d062-46d7-86e2-d87061d4b847> - This article from We Are Iowa explains how dust devils form. It describes that dust devils are most likely to develop when skies are clear and winds are light. In these conditions, ground temperatures can become much warmer than the air just above the surface, creating an unstable environment that causes the surface air to rise. The article notes that dust devils are most common in arid climates like the desert southwest of the United States and typically occur on clear, hot, dry afternoons. While most dust devils aren't powerful enough to cause damage, the strongest can produce winds over 60 mph, equivalent to the winds in a severe thunderstorm.