

Whirlwinds of Fire

By Lynn Cassidy

As I investigated some information about whirlwinds, I came across videos and pictures of a natural phenomenon known as a "fire whirl" or "fire tornado." The pictures and videos were quite amazing and interesting. What looks like a dust devil on the plains turns a brush fire into a whirling firestorm that sucks up the fire from the ground in a circulating tornado that shoots the fire sometimes hundreds of feet into the sky.

I had never seen this phenomenon before, either in person or on television. Some of the pictures were taken in Australia during large grass fires that created so much intense wind swirls that the fire was literally sucked up into a large circulating tornado stretching into the air. Other pictures showed fire on water as in an oil spill. The fire on water was strange enough, but to add the spectacle of a fire whirl on top of the water was even more amazing.

One of the videos showed the curious, scientific types how to create a fire whirl. The two men placed a circle of box fans around a fire pit. They lit the kerosene soaked wood on fire with a long lighter then turned on the box fans surrounding the fire. Next, they turned on the cameras and watched as the fire began to spin and rise high over the experiment. They showed the circulating fire in slow motion as well, which was quite hypnotizing!

If you are curious about the phenomenon of fire whirls or fire tornados, just search for these terms on YouTube sometime when you are bored or just curious about new visuals about what Nature can do. Of course, watch out because if you are like me, it just leads to other topics like videos of the world's largest tsunamis!