

Dust Devils Whip By Spirit

April 13 2007



On sol 1120 (February 26, 2007), the navigation camera aboard NASA's Mars Exploration Rover Spirit captured one of the best dust devils it's seen in its three-plus year mission. The series of navigation camera images were put together to make a dust devil movie.

The dust devil column is clearly defined and is clearly bent in the down wind direction. Near the end of the movie, the base of the dust devil becomes much wider. The atmospheric science team thinks that this is because the dust devil encountered some sand and therefore produced a "saltation skirt," an apron of material that is thrown out of the dust devil because it is too large to be carried up into suspension.

Also near the end of the movie the dust devil seems to move faster across the surface. This is because Spirit began taking pictures less

frequently, and not because the dust devil sped up.

Image Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech

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