

INCREDIBLE TORNADOES

Nobody really ⁰ says it any more, but you've probably heard the old-fashioned English ¹ 'It's raining cats and dogs' to describe very heavy rain. The ² origin of this idiom is obscure, and it has almost certainly never happened in real life. However, many other surprising things have been ³ seen to rain down from the clouds. One morning in 1981, the citizens of Naphlion, in Greece, saw small green frogs falling from the sky. They landed in trees, on roofs and on the streets. The ⁴ origin of frog came from North Africa, hundreds of kilometres away!

The **phenomenon** is quite easy to ⁵ see: small whirlwinds or tornadoes may form in certain weather conditions, which can ⁶ pick up small things – creatures or objects – when they pass over water. These can then be carried for many kilometres, and ⁷ eventually, they will be dropped by the clouds carrying them. There have been reports of fish, tomatoes, and ⁸ even rocks, being dropped from the sky.

However, it seems that fish are the most common thing to fall from the clouds (apart from rain). They are the lightest and most common **inhabitants** of water, after all. In one town in Honduras, a 'Rain of Fish' happens every year. The people of the area even have a festival to celebrate the occasion.

These stories tend to make light of the true nature of tornadoes, though. They are a force of nature that can be truly terrifying. There are many types of tornado and while most are relatively **harmless**, like the ones described above, every year parts of the world experience huge tornadoes, which can bring extreme destruction. They have been known to destroy whole towns, and kill thousands of people. And worse, some of them can be made of fire!

Known as 'fire tornadoes,' they usually occur when a large wildfire is in progress. These fires are so hot that they can create their own wind, which can turn into a **spinning** whirlwind of flame. Under the right conditions, they can grow to over ten metres wide and 300 metres tall. Although fire tornadoes usually move quite slowly, they can cause an incredible amount of destruction. They will set anything in their way on fire and throw burning objects into the **surrounding** areas. Sometimes they can last for more than an hour, and it is impossible to put them out. You just have to wait.

Glen Mason is one man who saw a fire tornado close up. He watched it for over half an hour before it finally died. 'It was about 500 metres away and it sounded just like a jet plane,' he said. 'It was terrifying, but also the most amazing and exciting thing I've ever seen. I'm a very lucky man – both to have seen it and to have survived it!'

 3 Read the whole article again. Are the sentences T (True), F (False) or NM (Not Mentioned)? Correct the false sentences.

- 1 It is not known where the phrase 'It's raining cats and dogs' comes from.
- 2 In Naphlion, people were surprised to see rocks falling from the sky.
- 3 Objects are picked up from the water by clouds.
- 4 People have been killed by rocks falling from the sky.
- 5 Fire tornadoes are not so dangerous when they move slowly.
- 6 Glen Mason is glad that he experienced a fire tornado.

 4 Match the **highlighted** words and phrases in the article to the definitions.

- 1 people or animals that live in a particular place
- 2 in a position around something
- 3 something that exists or happens, usually something unusual
- 4 not able or not likely to cause danger or damage
- 5 turning around very quickly