



ALEX DORE

SURPRISE SIGHTING: A waterspout – essentially a tornado over water – was spotted by visitors at Siloso Beach, Sentosa, yesterday at around 12pm.

TODAY reader Alex Dore, who sent us this photo, said: "People were running away, some were screaming because the winds got stronger and the table umbrellas flew away. Swimmers said they had some difficulty getting back because of the currents."

The 15-year-old student said the storm that accompanied the phenomenon lasted 20 minutes, while the waterspout itself lasted four minutes.

Resulting from high winds, waterspouts are whirlwinds over the sea which cause tall columns of water to be formed. They can travel at speeds of up to 150kmh, and are common in tropical areas where thundershowers occur frequently.

Waterspouts grow weaker as they get closer to the shore, so they are not dangerous to those on the beach. But strong waterspouts can pose threats to ships, planes and swimmers.

When contacted, a Sentosa spokesperson said such waterspouts do occur near the island, but added that beachgoers should not be alarmed. "Visitors should move away from the beach area when a waterspout appears," he said.