

INVISIBLE MONSTERS

Today, weather scientists (known as meteorologists) can predict many kinds of weather with amazing accuracy.

Weather satellites floating above Earth have cameras that can spot hurricanes the moment they start to swirl. Powerful radar can measure rainfall and wind speeds inside a raging thunderstorm. A skilled meteorologist can tell you a week in advance whether your Little League game could be rained out or if you'll need snow boots for recess.

Tornadoes, however, remain stubbornly mysterious.

Scientists know that tornadoes form inside supercell thunderstorms. But only 20 percent of supercells cause tornadoes. And it's impossible to know for sure which supercells will launch killer twisters and which will fizzle out.

And even after a tornado has formed inside a supercell, it's still impossible to see. The most

April 2011 had been
one of the most
violent weather months
in US history. That
month, an incredible
758 tornadoes had
touched down in the
United States.

powerful radar cannot get a clear picture of what is happening inside the swirling clouds of a thunderstorm. Tornadoes are like secretive monsters coming to life inside dark caves. They remain completely hidden until they roar out of the storm clouds to devour everything in their paths. As of now, there is only one tool that can detect that a tornado is on the way: the human eye. Somebody must actually see one as it bursts out of the sky.