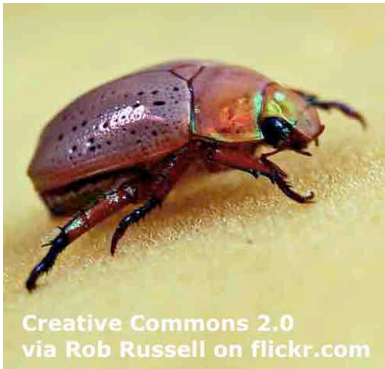


Australia's Christmas beetles are disappearing

26th December 2022



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via Rob Russell on flickr.com

There is a select group of creatures that is synonymous with Christmas - donkeys, reindeer, turkeys and robins. The image of a beetle does not spring to mind when thinking of the festive season. However, there is actually a Christmas

beetle, but this Christmas it has gone missing. Australia's Christmas beetle used to be an indication that the holiday season was on its way in the land down under. Its numbers have declined alarmingly. Dr Tanya Latty, an entomologist from the University of Sydney, said: "Everybody over the age of 35 remembers there being huge numbers of Christmas beetles when they were kids, but that just doesn't seem to happen any more."

The Christmas beetle is as unique to Australia as koalas and kangaroos. It is a colourful, shiny and harmless bug. Dr Latty told the BBC: "We have in Australia this really unique biological event where Christmas is associated with the arrival of these beautiful, glittery, friendly beetles." She said it was "absolutely critical" to find out why there are so few around. Scientists suspect that their dwindling numbers are due to habitat loss. In 2020, bushfires wiped out huge swathes of forest that were home to the beetles. Australia has the worst rate of mammal extinction in the world. Scientists fear the Christmas beetle may also soon die out. They asked people to send them photos if they see the beetle.

Sources: [phys.org](https://www.phys.org) / [smh.com](https://www.smh.com) / [abc.net.au](https://www.abc.net.au)

Writing

Governments should be fined heavily when one of their species dies out. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

creatures / Christmas / donkeys / reindeer / turkeys / festive season / beetles / age / Australia / kangaroos / glittery / scientists / habitat / forest / bushfires / extinction

True / False

- 1) The article says five creatures are associated with Christmas. T / F
- 2) The article says beetles spring to mind when we think of Christmas. T / F
- 3) The Christmas beetle tells people worldwide that Christmas is coming. T / F
- 4) An entomologist said kids today see lots of Christmas beetles. T / F
- 5) In Australia, Christmas beetles are as unique as kangaroos. T / F
- 6) An entomologist said bushfires contributed to the beetle's decline. T / F
- 7) Australia has the world's best rates of mammal preservation. T / F
- 8) An entomologist asked people to send her photos of Christmas beetles. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. creatures | a. gargantuan |
| 2. spring | b. areas |
| 3. indication | c. animals |
| 4. declined | d. distinctive |
| 5. huge | e. environment |
| 6. unique | f. sign |
| 7. associated | g. become extinct |
| 8. habitat | h. reduced |
| 9. swathes | i. linked |
| 10. die out | j. leap |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think of Christmas?
- b) What do you think of donkeys, reindeer, turkeys and robins?
- c) What's your favourite festive season?
- d) What do you know about beetles?
- e) Why is Australia called the land down under?
- f) What creatures are in decline in your country?
- g) Would you like to be an entomologist?
- h) What's your favourite festive moment as a kid?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1. a select group of creatures that is | a. and harmless bug |
| 2. The image of a beetle does not | b. was on its way |
| 3. the festive | c. extinction in the world |
| 4. an indication that the holiday season | d. season |
| 5. that just doesn't | e. due to habitat loss |
| 6. It is a colourful, shiny | f. synonymous with Christmas |
| 7. this really unique biological | g. huge swathes of forest |
| 8. their dwindling numbers are | h. event |
| 9. bushfires wiped out | i. spring to mind |
| 10. the worst rate of mammal | j. seem to happen any more |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- How is Christmas celebrated in your country?
- What is the purpose of beetles?
- What do you know about Australia's wildlife?
- What animals are unique to your country?
- How can we reverse habitat loss?
- How do you feel about animal extinction?
- What questions would you like to ask the entomologists?

Spelling

- a select group of eeccrusta
- nooynmyssu with Christmas
- thinking of the vstfeei season
- used to be an iidntncioa
- Its numbers have ddeinclc alarmingly
- an glstoteinom from the University of Sydney
- tryiletg, friendly beetles
- absolutely tircilac
- wgniddiln numbers
- due to iatbhat loss
- huge westsah of forest
- the worst rate of mammal ineixcttno

Answers – Synonym Match

1. c	2. j	3. f	4. h	5. a
6. d	7. i	8. e	9. b	10. g

Role Play

Role A – World Water Day

You think World Water Day is the best holiday. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their holidays. Also, tell the others which is the least worthy celebration of these (and why): World Teachers' Day, Public Service Day or World Toilet Day.

Role B – World Teachers' Day

You think World Teachers' Day is the best holiday. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their holidays. Also, tell the others which is the least worthy celebration of these (and why): World Water Day, Public Service Day or World Toilet Day.

Role C – Public Service Day

You think Public Service Day is the best holiday. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their holidays. Also, tell the others which is the least worthy celebration of these (and why): World Teachers' Day, World Water Day or World Toilet Day.

Role D – World Toilet Day

You think World Toilet Day is the best holiday. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their holidays. Also, tell the others which is the least worthy celebration of these (and why): World Teachers' Day, Public Service Day or World Water Day.

Speaking – Holidays

Rank these with your partner. Put the best seasons at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| • World Water Day | • Safer Internet Day |
| • New Year | • Public Service Day |
| • Labour Day | • World Teachers' Day |
| • World Religion Day | • World Toilet Day |

Answers – True False

1 T	2 F	3 F	4 F	5 T	6 T	7 F	8 T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.