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Australia's Christmas beetles are disappearing – 26th December 2022

Level 4

Christmas is associated with donkeys, reindeer, turkeys and robins. Beetles do not spring to mind when we think of the holiday season. However, there is a Christmas beetle in Australia. It has gone missing. It used to be a sign that Christmas was on its way. An insect expert 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 shiny, harmless Christmas beetle is as unique to Australia as koalas. The expert said Australia has a "really unique biological event where Christmas is associated with the arrival of these...beetles". She said it was "absolutely critical" to find out why there are so few around. It could be because of habitat loss. In 2020, bushfires wiped out many forests. Scientists are worried that the Christmas beetle may also be dying out.

Level 5

There is a group of creatures that is synonymous with Christmas - donkeys, reindeer, turkeys and robins. Beetles do not spring to mind when thinking of the holiday season. However, there is a Christmas beetle in Australia. This Christmas it has gone missing. It used to be a sign that Christmas was on its way in the land down under. Its numbers have declined rapidly. 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. It's a shiny and harmless bug. The entomologist told the BBC that Australia has a "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. She thinks it is because of habitat loss. In 2020, bushfires wiped out huge swathes of forest. Australia has the worst rate of mammal extinction in the world. Scientists fear the Christmas beetle may also soon die out.

Level 6

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.