

Als learn Droidspeak; The Reef's Coral Crisis; Portuguese hamsters on the run; and a cool raccoon raises autism awareness.

Hello and welcome to Squiz Kids Today ... your fresh take on what's happening in the world around you.

I'm Christie Kijurina

It's Wednesday, November 20 ...

In Squiz Kids Today ...Als learn Droidspeak; The Reef's Coral Crisis; Portuguese hamsters on the run; and a cool raccoon raises autism awareness.

That's what's making news, kid's style...

THE LOWDOWN

Let's dive into the big news from under the sea—

First, to Queensland's Great Barrier Reef, the largest coral reef system in the world—so big, astronauts can see it from space! It's home to all kinds of sea creatures and made up of millions of tiny organisms called polyps. These little builders grow together to form spectacular reefs, creating underwater cities for fish, turtles, and even sharks.

But this year, things aren't looking great. Scientists say parts of the reef, especially near Lizard Island, have lost nearly three-quarters of their coral cover. Why? A one-two punch from cyclones and climate change. Warm water caused coral bleaching—a bit like the corals getting a bad sunburn. When the water gets too warm for too long, corals lose the algae that feed them, turning ghostly white and struggling to survive.

Corals can recover—but they need time and cooler waters. The scientists are urging all of us to act fast on climate change to help the reef bounce back.

On a happier note, the world's largest known coral has been found! This mega coral, called *Pavona clavus*, was discovered in the Pacific Ocean off The Solomon Islands. It's 34 metres wide—longer than three buses parked end-to-end—and could be more than

300 years old. So, it was around when people were still writing with feather quills, and there were no planes, phones, or even electricity!

Both stories remind us just how incredible—and fragile—our oceans are.

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And speaking of amazing things, Matilda's captain Sam Kerr had some exciting news to share—she and her partner, American soccer star Kristie Mewis, are expecting a baby! With parents like them, this little one might be doing a different kind of dribbling - or swapping baby booties for football boots!

SPIN THE GLOBE

Each day we give the world globe a spin and find a news story from wherever it stops, and today, we've landed in Portugal, where some runaway rodents caused chaos on the runway!

Let me explain. Last week, a TAP Air Portugal flight, from the Portuguese capital, Lisbon, to the popular tourist destination of the Azores was packed with passengers. And in the cargo hold, a whole bunch of pets destined for a local shop, including ferrets, birds, and 132 mischievous hamsters, who, not content to sit in their cages, chewed through them and scurried throughout the plane's cargo hold.

After the passengers disembarked, the hunt for the hamsters began. The plane had to stay grounded for four days while workers searched high and low to find them all before making the flight back to Lisbon, because, as it turns out, hamsters and electrical wires do not mix!

POP CULTURE CORNER

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What do lint, plush toys, and a raccoon with a big heart and a knack for collecting have in common? You'll find them all in Carl the Collector! Carl is a raccoon and the newest star on American TV network PBS Kids, and he's making history as its first lead character on the autism spectrum.

Autism, for those who don't know, is a condition that makes brains work in unique ways. Some people with autism—called neurodivergent—have amazing abilities, like super focus, spotting tiny details, or learning heaps about their favourite topics. But things like social situations can sometimes be tricky.

In the show, Carl and his animal friends tackle everyday challenges, like keeping their room tidy or understanding each other's feelings. In one episode, Carl's eye for detail means that he is the only one of his friends that can tell identical twins apart, saving the day, and teaching his friends new skills.

The show is sparking conversations about neurodiversity and why the world is better when we embrace what makes everyone unique. So, hats off to Carl—he's one cool collector!

WEIRD SCIENCE

Have you ever watched Star Wars and wished you could understand R2-D2's beeping? Well, Microsoft has taken a page straight out of Star Wars and developed "Droidspeak," a new AI language that lets artificial intelligence models talk to each other faster than ever!

Why do AIs need to chat? Well, when solving big, complex problems—like predicting weather patterns or planning rescue missions—one AI might specialise in numbers while another is better at recognising images. Teaming up can make them more powerful, but communicating in human languages, like English, slows them down.

That's where Droidspeak comes in. Instead of using words, it's a high-tech mathematical code—like the AI version of R2-D2's chirps. By skipping human-style language, AIs can now share ideas nearly three times faster. The catch? So far, it only works with identical AIs, but researchers are already working on making it universal.

Now, if only they could crack the Chewbacca code. I'd love to speak Wookiee!

THE S'QUIZ

This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening ...

1. How old is the giant coral recently discovered off the Solomon Islands?
2. Which mischievous mammals escaped their cages in a Portuguese plane recently?
3. What is the name of the new AI language developed by Microsoft?

SHOUT OUTS

It's Wednesday, November 20 ... Universal Children's Day, marking the anniversary of the creation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child giving children lots of human rights including the right to play and to rest. Love that!

It's also a special day for these Squiz Kids celebrating a birthday today... Ashton from Ashmont, Charlotte from St Ives, Vaanya (pronounced Varn-Ya) from Leppington, Luan from Botany, Lincoln from Pakenham, Piper from Teneriffe, Celeste from North Rocks, Emily from Kyle Bay, Emily from Doncaster, Lulu from Koroit and Eunsu listening over in Seoul, Korea,

Belated shout outs go to ... Mabel from Davidson and Kennedy from Neutral Bay.

Classroom shoutouts go to... class 5C with Mrs Corey at St Johns Anglican College in Forest Lake, class 4W with Miss Napier at St Anthony's Catholic Parish Primary School in Picton, year 4 Blue with Miss B at Mount St Patrick Primary School in Murwillambah, class 3/4F with Mrs Franklin at Eglinton Public School and Room 12 with Kim at Moonee Ponds West Primary School.

The S'Quiz Answers:

1. More than 300 years old.
2. Hamsters
3. Droidspeak

Don't forget .. if you've got a birthday coming up and you want a shout out - or if you want a classroom shout out - drop us a line at squizkids@thesquiz.com.au or fill out the form on our website.

Well - that's all we have time for. Thanks for listening to Squiz Kids Today - We'll be back again tomorrow

In the meantime, get out there and have a most excellent day. Over and out.