

Europe swelters in a heatwave; a boy unearths Viking treasure; T. Rex was a late bloomer; and a spider builds a catapult

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, June 24 -

In Squiz Kids Today ... Europe swelters in a heatwave; a boy unearths Viking treasure; T. Rex was a late bloomer; and a spider builds a catapult

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

THE LOWDOWN

Europe is in the grip of a powerful heatwave, with temperatures soaring above 40 degrees Celsius in parts of France, Spain, Italy and Portugal this week.

Now, a heatwave isn't just one really hot day. It's when temperatures stay much hotter than normal for several days in a row, giving people, animals and even buildings very little chance to cool down, even overnight.

Weather experts say a large area of high pressure has become stuck over Europe, acting like a giant lid over the continent. It traps hot air flowing in from North Africa's Sahara Desert, while clear skies allow the summer sun to keep heating the ground. Scientists say climate change is making heatwaves happen more often and become more intense.

The scorching temperatures are affecting everyday life. Italy has issued its highest heat alert for a dozen cities, while forecasters in Britain say parts of the country could experience their hottest June weather on record. Health authorities have even issued a rare "red" warning across much of England, saying the heat could be dangerous not just for older people and babies, but even for healthy adults.

Authorities are urging people to drink plenty of water, stay out of the midday sun where possible, and check on elderly neighbours and relatives. They're also reminding grown-ups never to leave children or pets in a parked car, because temperatures inside a closed vehicle can rise to dangerous levels in just a few minutes.

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Staying in the UK for a minute...

Britain is preparing for a new Prime Minister after PM Keir Starmer announced he would step down following growing pressure from members of his own Labour Party. The favourite to replace him is Andy Burnham, who was, until recently, the Mayor of Manchester, one of Britain's biggest cities.

And if you're wondering why Britain isn't holding another election, it's because, just like Australia, people vote for Members of Parliament rather than a Prime Minister. It's a bit like a sporting team choosing a new captain halfway through the season. The team stays the same, but someone else takes over the top job.

The things you learn!!

SPIN THE GLOBE

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Each day we give the world globe a spin and find a news story from wherever it stops... and today we've landed in Norway, where a Year One student went looking for rocks... and found a Viking sword instead.

It sounds like something straight out of an adventure movie, but that's exactly what happened to six-year-old Henrik Refsnes Mørtvedt (HEN-rik REFFS-ness MURT-vet).

Henrik was on a school excursion collecting rocks for an arts and crafts project when he spotted something metallic sticking out of the ground. Curious, he gave it a tug... and uncovered a remarkably well-preserved iron sword that's believed to be around 1,200 years old.

Archaeologists say it dates back to the very beginning of the Viking Age, when Viking explorers travelled across Europe in their famous longships. While they're often remembered as fierce warriors, the Vikings were also skilled sailors, traders and craftspeople.

Henrik said he picked up the sword because he didn't want a tractor to run over it and damage it... what a good kid!

In fact, he did exactly the right thing by telling his teacher. The ancient sword will now be carefully preserved at a museum in the Norwegian capital, Oslo.

ANIMAL KINGDOM

Most spiders build webs to catch whatever flies into them. Flies, mozzies, moths...

But not this one...

Deep in the rainforests of Far North Queensland, scientists have documented a brand-new species they've named the ballista spider, after an ancient Roman siege machine that launched giant stones through the air. This remarkable little hunter builds what is basically a tiny catapult.

Over several hours, a spider spins dozens of tightly stretched silk strands into a sticky cone, then waits patiently nearby. The trap even gives off a chemical smell that attracts one very specific prey... the green tree ant. As soon as the curious ant bites the cone, the whole thing springs loose, catapulting the surprised insect upwards at incredible speed before it lands tangled in the spider's main web.

It's a clever strategy because green tree ants can deliver painful bites, so the spider keeps a safe distance while its spring-loaded trap does all the dangerous work. Scientists say they've never seen another spider use this kind of web before. As if spiders weren't amazing enough already!!!

ANCIENT EARTH

Have you ever wondered when you'll stop growing? For most people, it's somewhere around the end of the teenage years. But scientists have just discovered that T. rex had to wait longer....a whole lot longer...

New research suggests that the world's most famous dinosaur... Tyrannosaurus rex may have kept growing until it was 40 years old! For years, experts thought T. rex reached its full size by about the age of 25. But after studying tiny growth rings hidden inside fossil bones, they now believe these giant predators spent another 15 years getting bigger and bigger.

Those growth rings are a bit like the rings inside a tree trunk. Each one marks another year of growth. Using special lighting and powerful microscopes, researchers spotted rings that had been missed before, helping them piece together the life story of these prehistoric giants.

Scientists also think those extra growing years may have helped young T. rexes survive. Instead of competing with fully grown adults for food, teenage T. rexes probably hunted smaller animals until they were big enough to tackle larger prey.

Now, back to you... Imagine if you kept growing until you turned 40! How tall might you be?

THE S'QUIZ

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

1. Who is the man tipped to be the new British Prime Minister?
2. What type of habitat does the catapult-building spider live in?
3. How old is a T-Rex before it's fully grown?

SHOUTOUTS

It's Wednesday, June 24 – And it's a very happy 39th birthday to one of the greatest footballers of all time, Lionel Messi!

If anyone deserves a birthday cake today, it's Messi. Just yesterday, the Argentine superstar celebrated in style by scoring twice against Austria, helping his team win their World Cup group match and becoming the highest goal scorer in Men's FIFA World Cup history with an incredible 18 goals.

You'd think after a performance like that, someone might tell him to put his feet up and enjoy a day off...

It's also a special day for these Squiz Kids, celebrating a birthday today... Aiden from Oran Park, Daniel from Kallangur, Holly from Goonellabah, Jayden from Black Forest, Kobe from Malabar and Olivia from Roseville.

Classroom shoutouts go to... Class 5G with Mrs Jensen at Saint Thomas More Catholic Primary School in Ruse, class 6JW with Miss Walters at Wilsonton State School and class 4P with Ms Porter at Moss Vale Public School.

The S'Quiz Answers:

1. Andy Burnham
2. Rainforest
3. 40

Don't forget .. if you've got a birthday coming up and you'd like a shoutout, or if you want a classroom shoutout... 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 with

.

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