

The infinite scroll goes on trial; Raccoon racket rocks Germany; Saving Aussie sea lions; and the robot that runs faster than Usain Bolt.

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

I'm Bryce Corbett

It's Monday, August 24 -

In Squiz Kids today ... The infinite scroll goes on trial; Raccoon racket rocks Germany; Saving Aussie sea lions; and the robot that runs faster than Usain Bolt.

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

THE LOWDOWN

In a court room in a US town called Oakland, across the bay from the city of San Francisco - and not far from the headquarters of Facebook and Instagram - social media is on trial this week - in a case that impacts kids all over the world.

You hopefully won't be on social media yet - because, well, it's illegal to start with - and here in Australia a social media ban for under 16s was introduced last year .. but one of the features of social media apps like Tiktok, Instagram and Facebook is something called the infinite scroll ...

What is the infinite scroll? It's the tendency of social media users to scroll mindlessly through their feed - hooked by an algorithm which has been carefully designed to keep people glued to their screens.

How does that work? Robots, essentially, created by the big tech companies monitor our every move when we are on their platforms .. what we click on, what we like, how long we linger on a certain post .. and it creates an individualised portrait of who we are and what we're interested in and makes sure to keep serving up content it knows will keep us scrolling?

Why? Because the longer we are in their apps - the more money they make. Simple. And evidence is starting to emerge that creators of these apps have purposefully targeted kids to get them hooked.

But a court case which is happening this week in the United States may start to change all that. Twenty nine out of America's 50 states have joined together to sue Meta - the parent company of Instagram and Facebook - which may face fines of up to \$1.9 trillion - that's trillion with a T ... and be forced to change the way they operate.

Watch this space ...

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 ... China ... where a robot has just run faster than the fastest man on the planet.

The Humanoid Robot Games are underway in China, where a trio of gangly, human-looking robots lined up on an athletics track to run 100metres and made their clumsy - yet speedy way to the finish line.

And the winner did it in 9.39 seconds ... quite a bit faster than the current world record holder Usain Bolt, who ran the distance in 2009 in 9.58 seconds ...

As you'll see from the video I've linked to in today's show notes - the robots look a bit wobbly - and they haven't worked out how to slow down, with each one slamming into a big foam crash pad at the end of the track ... but it's an important next step in robots learning to do all the things humans can.

Having a robot that runs really fast, however, is not exactly going to make people rush out and buy one .. but having one that does the washing or makes the beds or tidies rooms ... now that would be a game changer ..

ANIMAL KINGDOM

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And it's down to Kangaroo Island we now hop ... see what I did there? As the state of South Australia continues its fight against bird flu - this time, with a vaccination program to save Australian sea lions.

Aussie sea lions live in huge colonies on the rocks and beaches of Kangaroo Island - where they share space with wild birds - many of which migrate north from Antarctica.

Problem is: there's a bird flu epidemic impacting wild bird populations - and the fear is it could spread to sea lions.

Which is why the government authorities in South Australia have started to look into immunising baby seals .. which is to say, just like the vaccines human kids regularly get to protect them from the world's worst diseases - a similar program to give a friendly jab to sea lion pups to keep them safe from bird flu.

And here's a fun fact: did you know that sea lions and seals and walruses are what's known as pinnipeds .. meaning they use their forward fins as feet? You learn something new everyday ...

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

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And so to Germany we go – where a rascally pest has experts scratching their heads.

Raccoons might appear to the untrained eye to be innocent and cute enough – but the introduced species has taken over in lots of parts of Germany and is wreaking a racoonish style of havoc.

What is an introduced species? It's a type of animal or plant that is not native to a particular place .. in Australia, for instance, kangaroos and koalas are native species.

Raccoons were introduced to Germany almost 100 years ago - initially kept on farms - but gradually they have made their way into the wild forests and have become pests.

Not least because raccoons that live together have a habit of pee-ing and pooh-ing in the same place - and that's not great when that place is in your roof cavity or attic.

Euuughh.

Recent studies have shown wild raccoon populations in Europe grew by 300 percent over a 20 year period - with the wily little rascals now found as far afield as Greece, Spain and Sweden.

BOOKWEEK CALLOUT

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Happy Book Week everyone! One of our favourite weeks of the year - as kids all over the country dress up as their favourite character from a book and parade around their school playground.

And a shout out to the Squiz Kids who are starting to send through photos of their Book Week costumes ... Axl's costume, dressing as Maui from Moana is just awesome. And Cruz, your Titanic costume is inspired! You two have really set the bar high!!

Kids ... when you're all dressed up - get an adult to take a photo of you and send it squizkids@thesquiz.com.au - and we'll post the pics to our socials, so everyone can appreciate how creative you are.

Be sure to include your name, age, where you're from and which character you've dressed as. There'll be prizes for the best ones. And teachers: we want to see what you dress as too!

And if you're keen to see Axl and Cruz's incredible efforts - *ask an adult to check out out the Squiz Kids feed on Instagram – the handle is @squizkids*

THE S'QUIZ

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

1. What sea mammals, that live on the beaches and rocks around Kangaroo Island may be vaccinated against bird flu?
2. Which pesky, introduced species is causing havoc in Germany and other parts of Europe?
3. How fast did a robot run in China this weekend, beating the human world record over 100 metres? Was it a) 5 seconds b) 9.39 seconds or c) 24.5 seconds?

SHOUT OUTS

It's Monday, August 24 – it's my birthday today!! Woo-hoo! Happy birthday to me!

Other super cool humans celebrating a birthday today - and tomorrow - include ... Cooper from Ashmont, Sriyansh (pron. Sreeyansh) from Cranbourne East, Oliver from Ryde, Amelia from Yarrawonga, Elena from Vermont South, Rowan from Yass, Lenny from Shoalhaven Heads, Eloise from Oxley, Chloe from Kurri Kirri, Charlotte from Hackham, Viyan from Hope Island, and Odette from Jerilderie, who would like to wish me a big happy birthday too! Ohh– thank you Odette - and thanks for remembering. Very kind of you.

A belated shoutouts goes to ... Patience from Fawkner, Elsie from Cairns and Eva from Sunnybrook

And because it's Book Week, a shoutout to Squiz Kids Ellie from Darwin and to Aaron from Sydney, who have both written their own books. I've popped a link to each of them in the episode notes. Well done, guys!

<https://www.quotev.com/story/17504497/Winner>

<https://www.amazon.com/Radiant-Rainbow-Run-Aaron-Fan/dp/B0H4L6DQFF>

Classroom shoutouts go to ... Class 4Blue and their teacher, Miss B at Mount Saint Patrick Primary School in Murwillumbah, Class 3S and their teacher Miss Swan at Sunnybank State School, and Class 5/6 and their teacher, Mr Zahra, at Jerramungup District High School in WA.

The S'Quiz Answers:

1. Sea lions
2. Raccoons
3. b) 9.39 seconds

Don't forget .. if you've got a birthday coming up and you'd like a shoutout, or if you want a classroom shoutout, or parents, if you'd like to shout out a class or a wonderful teacher... 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 a Squiz The World episode where we pay a visit to Scotland ... it's

been in the news a lot this past month with the Commonwealth Games - but how much do you really know about the country where a stuffed sheep's gut is considered a delicacy?

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