

The Lazy Editor

What Killed the Birds of Beebe?

WHY DID THOUSANDS OF BIRDS DROP DEAD IN BEEBE, ARKANSAS?

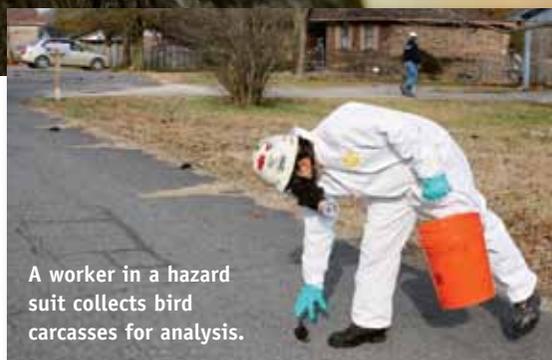
BY SARI WILSON

DIRECTIONS: Read the following article, which contains many terrible mistakes. Then follow the prompts in the box on p. 23.

1 Shane Roberts and his family were ringing in the New Year at their home in Beebe, Arkansas, when suddenly they heard a heavy thud on their roof. Then another. And another. The thumps came faster and faster, like a hail of bowling balls, it sounded like something was trying to get in. Shane threw open the door and, in the darkness, could just make out dozens of strange lumps strewn across his yard.

2 The next morning, Shane and other residents of Beebe woke to a creepy scene: thousands of dead red-winged blackbirds. Their carcasses blanketed lawns, roofs, and streets. “It was hard to drive down the street in some places without running over them, said one resident.”

3 Incidents like the one in Beebe is surprisingly common. Every year, more than 5 million birds

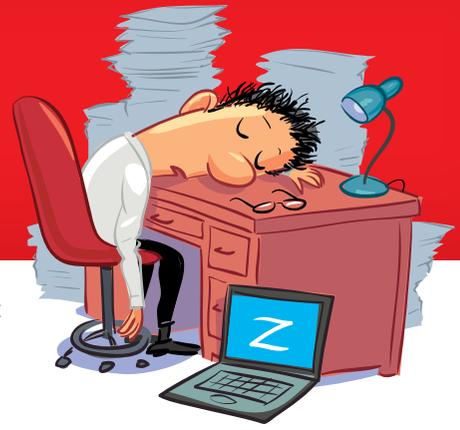


A worker in a hazard suit collects bird carcasses for analysis.

perishes in mass die-offs in the United States. The phenomenon is known as “sudden mass animal death.” Scientists say mass animal death can be caused by bad weather, disease, or poisoning, among other things. Some scientists speculate that such events is becoming more frequent as a result of air and water pollution, as well as the increasing number of cell phone towers, airplanes, wind mills, and powerlines.

4 Still the winter of 2011 saw a particularly bizarre—even unprecedented—string of sudden mass animal deaths. Thousands of buffalo in Vietnam and hundreds of cows in Wisconsin suddenly collapsed. In Italy 7,000 turtledoves fell from the trees

WE LOVE THIS STORY. TOO BAD WE COULDN'T BE BOTHERED TO EDIT IT! WILL YOU FIX IT FOR US?



with strange blue stains on their beaks. In Chicago, thousands of fish were found dead in the harbor. And in Maryland two million fish washed up on the shore in Chesapeake Bay. So many birds died all over the world that the media dubbed the winter of 2011 “Aflockalypse.”

5 In Beebe people scrambled to make sense of what had happened. Was secret government testing to blame? Or maybe a shift in the Earth’s magnetic field? Or perhaps it was a sign of some terrible coming disaster? In fact, it was none of those things. When health officials autopsied the carcasses they discovered that the birds died from blunt force trauma. The prevailing explanation is that New Year’s Eve fireworks set off near a nesting site startled the birds into flight. Because blackbirds have poor

eyesight and don’t usually fly in the dark they could have become disoriented and crashed into telephone poles, houses, and even one another.

6 Some residents of Beebe weren’t satisfied with this explanation, though. Mass animal deaths around the world continue. Last April, hundreds of dolphins and pelicans washed up on the shores of Peru in South America. This past New Year’s Eve, a few hundred blackbirds once again crashed to their deaths in Beebe.

7 Will we see another string of mass animal deaths this year? No one knows. You might want to carry an umbrella on New Year’s Eve. ●

FIND IT/FIX IT

DIRECTIONS: Can you find the following errors in the article and fix them? Write the answers on your own paper.

PARAGRAPH 1: Our writer ran away before we could ask her to fix the run-on sentence in this paragraph. Please fix it for her.

PARAGRAPH 2: We love that our writer included a quote, but we don’t love the totally incorrect way she punctuated it. Help!

PARAGRAPH 3: Subjects and verbs must always agree. Find and fix the three agreement errors.

PARAGRAPHS 4 & 5: Introductory words, clauses, and phrases should be followed by a comma. For example: “On Tuesday, I overslept. However, I made it to school on time.” Please insert the six missing commas.

PARAGRAPHS 6 & 7: Using transition words and phrases to connect your ideas will make your writing clear and flowing. In Paragraph 6, add a transition word or phrase to connect the first two sentences. Paragraph 7 would also benefit from a transition. Find where the transition should go and add it.

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