



CK Reporter of the Week
Clarise Reichley, Denver

Beetle threatens Colorado spruce

I live in the mountains of southern Colorado, close to the border with New Mexico.

Farther up the canyon from my home, there's a deadly invader attacking countless victims. It's a silent battle, but I can almost hear their screams.

The victims are spruce trees.

The invader is the spruce bark beetle: tiny, viciously hungry, and about the size of a grain of rice.

As I stand at the top of the pass on the road to Chama, I can see the results: thousands of acres of dead, brown trees on mountain after mountain as far as my eyes can see.

It's a total transformation of what was once a beautiful green landscape, creating a dangerous fire hazard for the years ahead.

The beetles kill spruce trees by boring through the bark and feeding and breeding in the cambium, the layer of living tissue right underneath the bark.

The beetles usually attack fallen trees, but sometimes they will attack standing ones and kill them.

Spruce bark beetles have always been a natural feature of the forest environment, and their infestations are nothing new. But this current one is especially catastrophic.

According to Michael Tooley, a timber specialist with the Forest Service in the Rio Grande National Forest, "an epidemic like this one is rare and only comes up once every 500 to 600 years."

Usually, a live spruce tree is able to defend itself by attempting to "pitch out" the beetle.

It fills the holes the beetles make with resin and pushes the beetles out.

However, because of rising temperatures and drought, spruce trees can't make enough pitch for their defense, giving the advantage to the beetles.

Tooley says that the drought of 2002 to 2003 drove the event that we're seeing right now.

Fire suppression is also to blame. Small wildfires are actually good for forests, clearing space and



photo/Gary Strieker

encouraging new growth.

But because we have been preventing wildfires for so long, the forests have become congested.

The trees are too dense for sunlight to pass through and for anything to grow underneath them.

And in a congested forest, the beetles can spread very quickly.

The epidemic is spreading across Colorado and beyond.

In our district alone, according to Tooley, about 126,000 acres have been affected by the beetle – 85 percent of our spruce forests to date.

Millions of trees have already died.

"With an epidemic like this," Tooley says, "there's nothing we can do to stop the beetles."

During my lifetime, I will never see the spruces as

they were a few years ago.

It will take our spruce forests hundreds of years to recover from this epidemic.

There are a lot of spruce trees where I live, but none of them have yet been affected by the beetles; you have to go farther up into the higher mountains to see the effects.

However, I'm still worried that the beetles will reach the forest around my home and all our spruce trees will be killed.

Meanwhile, I can still almost hear those silent screams up in the mountains.



photo/Gilles San Martin



By Nandi Strieker,
11, a CK Reporter
from Antonito

'Supergirl' novel stays true to CW program

For all the people who watch the CW hit TV Series, "Supergirl: Age of Atlantis" by Jo Whittemore, is for you. This TV-inspired novel is packed with adventure and fun.

Kara Danvers is just your ordinary CatCo reporter, but with a big secret.

She's Supergirl, who, along with her friends Winn Schott and James Olsen, works with the DEO (the Department of Extranormal Operations) to bring down supervillains and save National City time after time, until instead of there being too many villains, there are too many heroes.

Ordinary citizens are randomly getting powers, with no explanation why.

This would seem like a good thing, except the citizens don't know how to use their powers, and some of them aren't using their powers for good at all.

Giant cats escape from a zoo, and streets crack open.

These inexperienced new heroes are hurting more than helping.

People are out of control. Martian Manhunter and Mon El are trying to help, but there are more and more super citizens at every turn.

In the meantime, the DEO has captured a strange humanoid underwater creature that seems to want to find something.

The DEO discovered "Bubbles" at an aquarium, where security footage shows him diving into the water and trying to strangle a diver feeding some sharks.

He has already tried to escape more than once, and is proving to be more intelligent than the DEO originally thought.

Are these two mysterious circumstances connected? Is not even Supergirl immune to the wave of new powers sweeping the city?

What has drawn the mysterious creature to National City? I thought that this book really did a good job of representing the TV show.

However, it does have spoilers from the show if you haven't seen Season Three yet.

In this novel, there is lots of description, and you can really visualize the scene playing out in front of your eyes. It feels like you are reading a comic book.

Jo Whittemore excels at taking the characters from the show and perfectly continuing their personalities.

This book is for third grade and up, though it might seem childish for people over 12.

The sentences are very simple, and there is no inappropriate content, so it's good for kids.

This book has a partner, "The Flash: Hocus Pocus," written by Barry Yga, also based on a CW TV Series, The Flash.



By Sylvia Goodman,
12, a CK Reporter
from Centennial

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Aussie magpies become smarter in groups

Magpies in Colorado are related to crows, and, like their cousins, they are very smart birds.

The Australian magpie isn't related to either our magpies or to crows.

It got its name from early European settlers who called it a magpie because it looks so much like one.

But they must have named it before they heard its voice: While true magpies croak and call like crows, Australian magpies have beautiful singing voices.

And while they might not be quite as clever as their American twins, researchers in Western Australia have found that magpies there seem to become smarter if they live in large flocks.

Some magpies live in small groups of three or four, while others live in larger flocks of a dozen or more birds.

Researchers from the University of Western Australia in Perth put colored bands on the legs of magpies in order to identify them, and then set out various puzzles.

One puzzle, seen in this picture, offered the bird a variety of holes with covers that could be tipped up.

In one hole, researchers put a piece of mozzarella cheese.

The first time around, the bird would simply tilt up covers until it discovered the cheese.

But the smarter birds were able to remember which hole the cheese was in, the next time it was put out for them, would go straight to that one.



An Australian magpie searches a puzzle to find where researchers have hidden a piece of mozzarella cheese (Photo/University of Western Australia)

The researchers noticed that the birds from larger flocks were far more likely to remember and make that fast, correct choice.

They also did much better in three other tests they were given.

This isn't just about birds, they suggested.

Their theory is that living in large groups means learning to recognize more individuals and to figure out different personalities.

In a large group, you might have one individual with a bad temper and another who was kind, one who would share food and another who was greedy and so forth.

The idea is that living in a group like that would make you pay attention and that would keep your brain active.

They also tested very young birds to see if it was a natural talent among large-flock birds or something that developed.

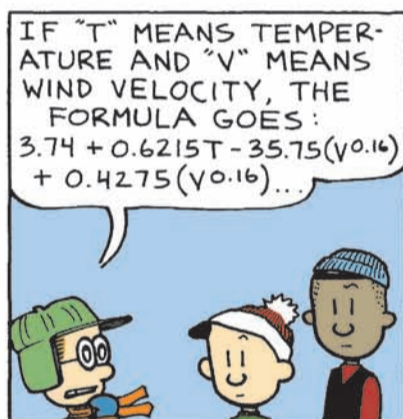
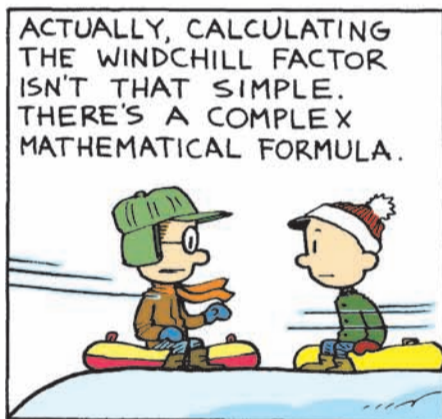
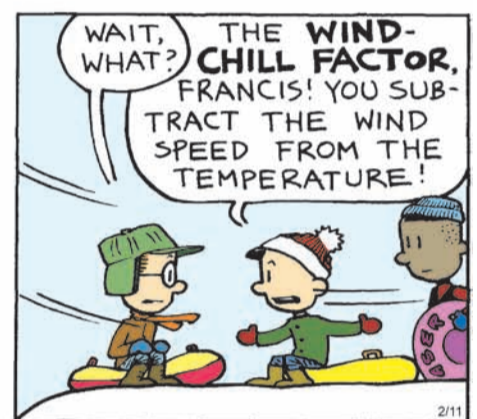
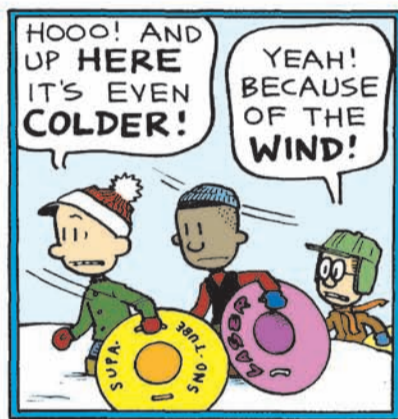
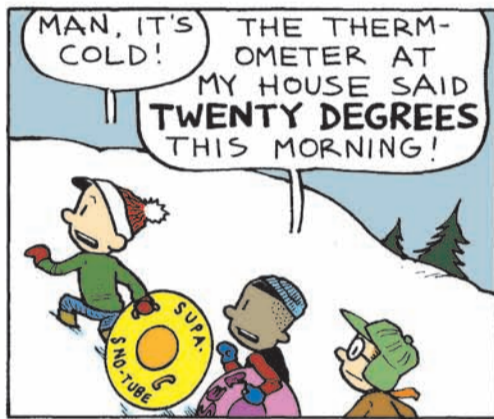
As the birds grew older, they got better at solving the puzzles, while small-flock birds stayed the same.

This, they say, suggests that the birds became smarter from living in the flock, not just by nature.

They also discovered that female birds in the larger flocks were more successful mothers, but are not sure why. Perhaps smart mothers can protect their babies better, or maybe they do a better job of finding good, nutritious food.

Other biologists aren't convinced of this theory about large groups, but these magpie experiments will make them think it over some more.

Big Nate



Sudoku

	6				2
	3		6		4
5					
4				5	6
		2			
			4		3

Rules: Every row across, every column down and each of the six smaller boxes must contain numerals 1,2,3,4,5 and 6, one time and one time only.
The solution to this week's puzzle is on Page 3.



Brainteaser

On this date in 1960, African-American students in Nashville, TN, began to sit at lunch counters, politely asking to be served, in demonstrations that led to the end of white-only restaurants, so our answers will begin with "L" for "lunch."

1. Spotted feline predator native to Africa and Asia.
2. A five-line poem that almost always features very silly humor
3. The highest point in Rocky Mountain National Park, this mountain can be seen from nearly anywhere in the northern parts of the Front Range.
4. Author of "A Wrinkle in Time."
5. A soft cheese known for its extremely strong odor
6. Hub City on the Eastern Plains where I-70, US 24, 40 and 287, and State Routes 71 and 94 all pass through. It's also the seat of Lincoln County.
7. Honest Abe
8. The car on a train that contains the engine which makes the whole train move.
9. The lines that measure how far north or south of the Equator you are.
10. Shorter term for "light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation."

(answers on Page Three)

Metal detectors turn up sort of ancient sort of Roman sort of gold

A pair of detectorists -- as the British call those who go out with metal detectors to find treasure -- had a very short burst of wealth and joy recently when they discovered 54 ancient Roman gold coins in a recently plowed field.

The two men had asked the farmer for permission to search his field, and were very excited when they found some buried shards of pottery and the coins.

They shouted and danced and started thinking about what they would do with the money from the buried treasure they had found, and why not?

They weren't very experienced in the hobby yet, but they knew that coins like these might be worth nearly \$350,000.

They would have to notify the government, and the

farmer, but first they ran to show their treasure to a friend who had more experience in metal detecting.

He took one look at the coins and told the pair that there was something wrong.

Or maybe three things wrong:

They weren't ancient.

They weren't Roman.

And they weren't gold.

Some asking around revealed the truth: A BBC comedy show called "Detectorists" had been shooting an episode in the area, and had put the fake coins in the ground.

In the show, a tractor plowed up the coins, which made it hard to find them and pick them all up afterwards.

Unless, of course, you had a metal detector.



photo/ <http://www.cngcoins.com>

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NASA's Space Place

<http://tinyurl.com/ckspace>

NIE Special Report

<http://tinyurl.com/ckniereport>

Headline Geography

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How to become a NextGen Reporter!

<http://tinyurl.com/colokidsreporter>



To read the sources for these stories

Spruce Beetles

Magpies

Buried treasure

go to <http://www.tinyurl.com/ckstorylinks>

Hooch

Chapter Six – The Invitation

Our story so far: George's gangster friend Eddie ran into Kenny in town on the last day of school and told him he's got a chance for him to earn some money.

Now that school was over, Kenny was back living at the farm full time.

He was getting up early each day and working in the milking parlor, then, when the barn was clean, hoeing in the cornfield and splitting wood until the cows came back and it was time to milk again. Weekends during the school year had kept him in good shape, but he was still glad to see his bed at night and sorry to leave it the next morning.

It was Thursday when George came up to him in the cornfield.

"Eddie says he talked to you about working," he said, keeping his voice low.

Kenny looked up and stopped chopping at the weeds in that row, leaning on his hoe and wiping his forehead with the back of his hand.

"He said something about making some money," he agreed.

"He seems to have taken a shine to you," George said. "Or at least Theda has."

Kenny smirked. "Her name isn't really Theda, is it?"

"She's Eddie's girlfriend," George replied. "If she says her name is 'Charlie Chaplin,' then I'm gonna call her Charlie Chaplin. You will, too, if you're smart. Anyway, Eddie's getting some people together at a camp on Chazy Lake this weekend and he wants us to come up and help out. Serve drinks and clean up, but also take these city people out and help them catch some fish."

"For the whole weekend?" Kenny asked.

George nodded, and looked over the corn to where P  p   was working. "I'm going to tell Pop that I'm taking you up to Quebec to work construction with me," he said.

"You think he'll agree?"

"I've learned never to try to figure out what he knows and what he doesn't know," George admitted. "And, since I don't know what he knows, I don't know what he thinks about it. But Raymond is on patrol all weekend and, after the time they spent getting wood in last week, the others are all busy catching up on the chores they let go at their own farms. So, if Pop is okay with it, we'll be fine. If he says 'no,' I'll just tell Eddie you couldn't make it."

George started to go back to the row where he had been working, but then turned back. "Kenny, if you go, you've got to understand, you are a waiter, okay? You're not one of the guys. You can't clown around or make jokes or anything. Just do what you're told and keep your mouth shut and stay out of the way, got it?"

"I know," Kenny said. He watched George walk away through the corn and then went back to his work.

He wondered to himself what Theda's real name was, but he knew Eddie's last name wasn't really Nickels, either.

George waited until they were in the shed putting away their tools.

"Think you can spare this fellow for the weekend?" he asked P  p  . "We're putting up trusses and we're shorthanded. He'd make some extra money and maybe he'd learn something."

P  p   looked at Kenny and then back at George. "You think he's tall enough? How can he push up trusses, as little as he is?"

"He's nearly as tall as Paul," George said. "And anyway, he can haul tools while the others are pushing the trusses into place."

P  p   rubbed his chin for a moment. "You know, that leaves me with everything for the weekend, all the milking and the mucking out. Most weekends, when you're up there working, I've got him here. That's how it worked so well to have you gone. Now you're both going to be gone?"

George was right, Kenny thought. You couldn't tell whether P  p   was really concerned about the work or whether he knew what George was up to and didn't want Kenny getting involved in it. They stood silently as P  p   continued to ponder things.

At last, he spoke again. "When do you plan on leaving?"

"Around noon," George said. "We have to run up to Huntingdon and pick up some tar paper and shingles."

"In the roadster?" P  p   asked, and now Kenny really didn't know if he was serious or if he was just trying to pick apart George's story.

"No, there's a truck there," George said.

P  p   didn't say anything for a few minutes, but started to straighten some screwdrivers on the toolbench, putting them back in their slots. He had to know, Kenny thought. He had to know. He was trying to decide if he would let Kenny get involved in the rumrunning.

P  p   turned to him. "You want to do this, do you?" he asked, and Kenny nodded, his eyes begging for the chance.

"Well, I don't plan to split any wood this weekend, you know," P  p   said. "I'll have enough to do without that. But if by noon tomorrow, you've got the barn and the milking parlor clean, and that stack of wood by the dooryard all split for your grandmother, I suppose you can go. But you might want to do a little splitting tonight after dinner, just to be sure you've got it done."

He walked out of the shed, and George followed him. Kenny stayed behind for a moment, wondering.

If Raymond had been coming to the farm this weekend, would P  p   have agreed to let him go with George?

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For a teaching guide, go to <http://tinyurl.com/ckserial>

Sudoku Solution

1	6	4	5	3	2
2	3	5	6	1	4
5	2	6	3	4	1
4	1	3	2	5	6
3	4	2	1	6	5
6	5	1	4	2	3

Brainteaser Solution



(see Page Three)

10 right - Wow!

7 right - Great!

5 right - Good

3 right - See you next time!

1. leopard 2. limerick 3. Long's Peak 4. (Madelieine) L'Engle
5. Limburger 6. Limon 7. Lincoln 8. locomotive 9. latitude
10. laser

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