

Aflockalypse: More mass animal deaths, thousands of fish found floating in Florida and 200 birds dead on Texas bridge

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Region: [USA](#)
Theme: [Environment](#)

- Thousands of fish found floating in Florida after cold snap
- 200 birds found dead on highway bridge in Texas
- 50 dead jackdaws found on city street in Sweden
- 100 tons of sardines, croaker and catfish wash up dead on Brazilian coast
- Hundreds of fish dead in New Zealand
- And in Britain, 40,000 devil crabs join list of casualties

More and more animals are being found dead as the mysterious spate of mass bird and fish deaths has turned into a global phenomenon.

The latest two separate incidents saw thousands of fish found floating in a creek in Florida and 200 birds found dead on a highway bridge in Texas.

Experts were yesterday carrying out tests on around 50 jackdaws found dead in a street in Falkoping, Sweden, that appear to have suffered the same fate as thousands of their cousins who fell from the sky in separate incidents in the U.S.



Problem on a large scale: Thousands of dead fish have washed up on the shores of Spruce Creek in Port Orange, Florida



Road to nowhere: Dead birds litter a bridge on Highway 155 in Texas

[Enlarge](#)



The plot thickens: Rescue chief Christer Olofsson holds a dead bird in Falköping, Sweden. Dozens of jackdaws were found dead on the street



Shortly before midnight on Tuesday, residents found 50 to 100 jackdaws on a street in Falköping, southeast of Skövde



Flock: Two mass bird deaths (above, in Louisiana) within days of each other have baffled experts, with some blaming fireworks for confusing the birds or parasites

Swedish experts have said the shock of fireworks being let off near the city, in the south-east of the country, and difficulty finding food may have led to the deaths of the jackdaws.

Many of the birds are believed to have died from stress or as a result of being run over by vehicles while disoriented.

And scientists have also been left baffled by at least 100 tons of sardines, croaker and catfish washing up dead along the Brazil coastline near Paranaguá.

There were more fish deaths reported today in New Zealand, while in England, the

carcasses of 40,000 devil crabs are strewn across a beach in Kent.

Hundreds of dead starlings and robins were found scattered in backyards in the Kentucky town of Gilbertsville while an estimated two million dead fish have washed ashore in Chesapeake Bay, Maryland.

They are the latest in a spate of incidents which are being blamed on New Year fireworks, thunderstorms, cold weather, parasites and even poisoning.

The internet has been abuzz with conspiracy theories about secret government experiments being behind the deaths, or it being a sign of a looming Armageddon at the end of the Mayan calendar next year.

The mass deaths include:

- 450 red-winged blackbirds, brown-headed cowbirds, grackles and starlings found littering a highway in Baton Rouge, Louisiana
- 3,000 blackbirds on roofs and roads in the small town of Beebe, Arkansas
- Thousands of 'devil crabs' washed up along the Kent coast near Thanet
- Thousands of drum fish washed along a 20-mile stretch of the Arkansas River
- Tens of thousands of small fish in Chesapeake Bay, Maryland
- Thousands of dead fish found floating in warm Florida creek
- Hundreds of snapper fish found dead in New Zealand
- Scores of American Coots found dead on Texas highway bridge

Tests are being carried out on the dead animals, but results are not expected for several weeks.



Mystery: A starling lies along the Morganza Highway in Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana. Experts said hundreds of birds may have died after hitting power lines



Confused: A worker stoops to pick up one of the many birds' carcasses which littered Beebe, Arkansas. Numerous theories are being put forward as to what may have killed them



Post-mortem examination: Dr Brandon Doss takes a close look at red-winged blackbirds brought into his lab as part of research being carried out to find out what killed them

Thousands of Brazilian fishermen are struggling to make ends meet after the sale of seafood was temporarily suspended when masses of fish were discovered dead in Paranaguá, Antonina and Guaraqueçaba Pontal do Paraná.

Experts have speculated that cold weather or chemical leaks could be behind the deaths.

Edmir Manoel Ferreira, president of the Federation of Fishermen's Colony of Parana, said the deaths had been discovered since Thursday last week.



Gruesome: New Year revellers watched in horror as the birds rained down on houses and cars in Beebe



Creepy: Thousands of dead drum fish were also discovered just miles away lining the shores of the Arkansas River

‘On Thursday we began to find a lot of dead fish. One community had to bury 15 tons alone.

‘We are experiencing a very sad situation on the coast.’

Samples of the dead fish have been sent to the Centre for Marine Studies at the Universidade Federal do Parana.

One of the latest incidents saw thousands of fish found rotting and floating in Spruce Creek, Florida, after a period of cold weather.

Mullet, ladyfish and catfish have been washing up as winds cause the carcasses to gather on bends along the creek.

And 200 birds were found dead on a highway bridge crossing Lake O’ the Pines in Big Cypress Creek, Texas.

Experts believed the birds had been hit by passing vehicles while walking or apparently trying to roost on the bridge.

The cold weather in Britain has also been blamed for the deaths of 40,000 Velvet swimming crabs – also known as ‘devil’ crabs – found littering beaches in Thanet.

Last year, the Environment Agency set up an inquiry into unexplained numbers of deaths amid fears a mystery virus could be to blame.

But it concluded the crab deaths were linked to the cold weather.

Tony Childs, Thanet Coast Project Manager, said: 'We had a crash in numbers last year and we hadn't expected such a large population.

'As happens with the circle of life in nature, we expect the crabs to be naturally dispersed from our shores very quickly by our local seagulls.

'We are hopeful the crab population will soon recover.'

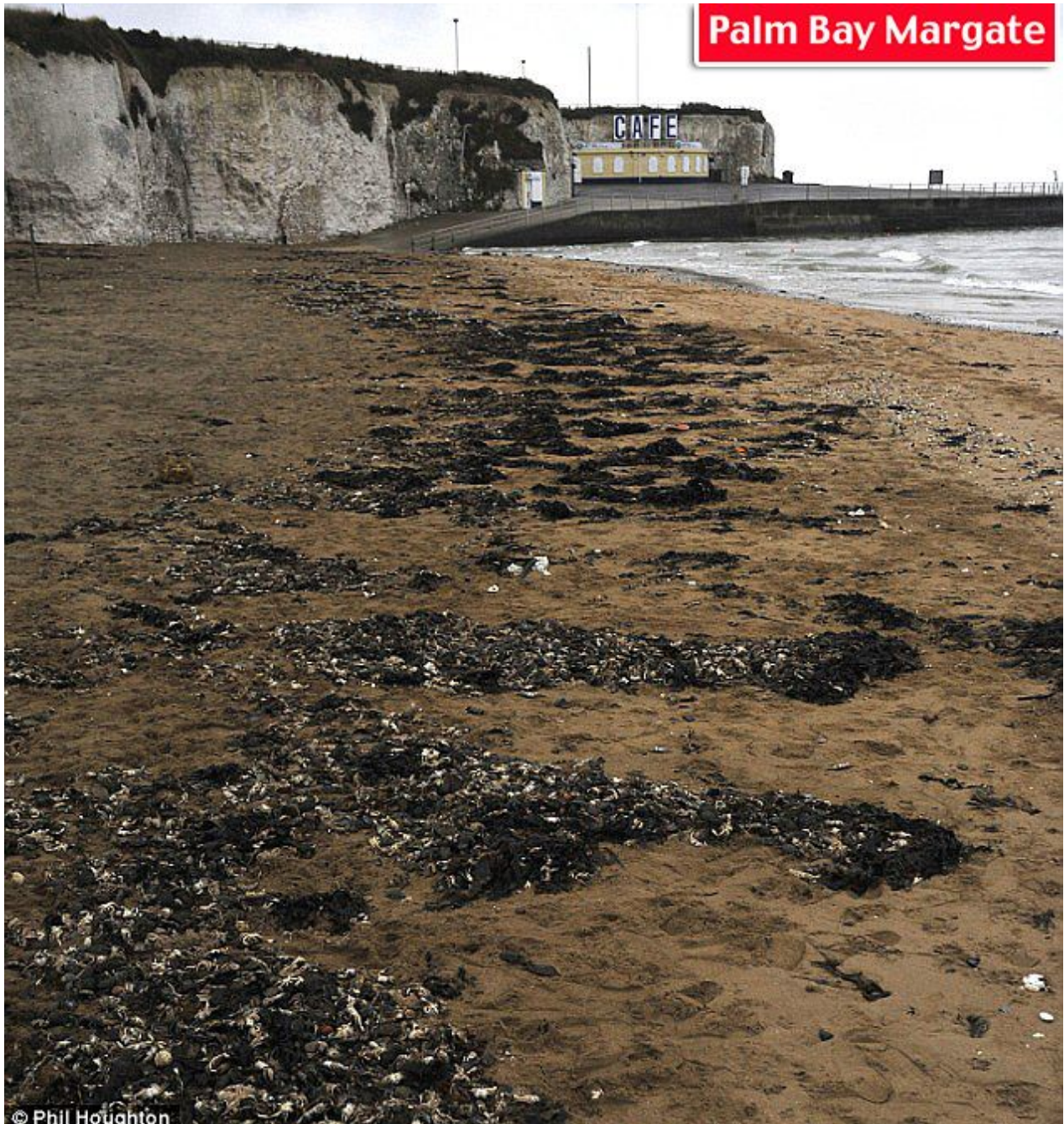
Scientists blamed fireworks for confusing blackbirds in Beebe, Arkansas, with then crashed into homes, cars and each other as people celebrated the New Year.

Another 450 birds were also found dead along a highway in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. They are believed to have hit power lines after becoming disoriented.

Fifty of the creatures were found near a power line 30ft from Louisiana Highway 1. A second group was discovered stretched from the power line across the highway just a quarter of a mile away.

Dan Cristol, a biology professor and co-founder of the Institute for Integrative Bird Behavior Studies, said the Louisiana birds may have been ill or startled from their roost before hitting the power line.

'They don't hit a power line for no reason,' he said.



Thousands of them: Crabs washed up at Palm Bay, Margate, are thought to have died of hypothermia



A healthy specimen: A live devil crab in its favourite pose, by a rock under the sea... in warmer conditions

New Year's revellers spent the holiday weekend cleaning up dead red-winged blackbirds in Beebe. Some blamed the bad weather, while others said one confused bird could have led the group into a fatal plunge.

Experts in Beebe said fireworks may have caused frightened birds to fly lower than normal, where they crashed into homes and other objects.

Karen Rowe, an ornithologist with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, said: 'The blackbirds were flying at rooftop level instead of treetop level.'

'Blackbirds have poor eyesight and they started colliding with things.'

Wildlife officials in both Arkansas and Louisiana have sent the carcasses to researchers at the National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wisconsin, and the University of Georgia.

In 1999, several thousand grackle birds fell from the sky and staggered around before dying in north Louisiana.

It took five months to get the diagnosis – an E. coli infection of the air sacs in their skulls.

It comes after 100,000 drum fish were discovered in the Arkansas River, just 100 miles from Beebe.

Officials said the deaths were not related to the birds, and they had likely been affected by illness as it was one species.

They blame the deaths – affecting menhaden, spots and croakers – on the stress of cold water.

Tens of thousands of small fish have also been discovered dead in Chesapeake Bay, Maryland.

Another explanation was that violent thunderstorms may have disoriented the flock.

Red-winged blackbirds are among North America's most abundant birds, with somewhere between 100million and 200million nationwide, according to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York.

A few grackles and a couple of starlings were also among the dead. Those species roost with blackbirds, particularly in winter.

Down by the (green) riverside...

Nature lovers were startled when they recently went down to the river in Goldstream Provincial Park in Vancouver Island, Canada.

For some reason, the water had turned fluorescent green.

The mysterious colouring lasted for about an hour, flowing down into the environmentally sensitive estuary.



Green green grass... and water: This river in Goldstream Provincial Park, Vancouver Island, Canada turned a mysterious colour for an hour before returning to normal

And then the river, known for its dramatic salmon runs, eagles and other wildlife, was back to its normal colour.

Ministry of Environment teams have begun an investigation and samples have been collected for analysis.

No dead fish or animals have yet been found.

Although not yet confirmed, the authorities believe it was a prank carried out using water-testing dye.

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