

2021 CICADA FACT SHEET  
AND SURVIVAL GUIDE

don't  
bug  
out!





**The last time our local cicadas saw the light of day was in 2004. Now, 17 years later, they're back, about to emerge from their underground lairs in larger, louder numbers than ever. If you've never experienced this unforgettable event of nature or even if you have, knowing what to expect can help you cope. This brochure was prepared to give you all the facts you need to make it through the "Return of the 17-Year Cicadas."**

** When are they coming and for how long?**

We'll start to see them beginning the last two weeks in May and lasting into the second week of June. Once the soil reaches 64 degrees Fahrenheit at a depth of eight inches, they start popping out. Some say it's about the same time iris flowers bloom.

** Are cicadas locusts?**

No. Locusts look like grasshoppers. The black and orange, red-eyed periodical cicadas in our area are a species of insect called *Magicada Septendecim*. They're categorized geographically into groups called Broods and assigned a Roman numeral. Our local cicadas are known as Brood X (10). They're referred to as periodical because they burst upon the scene periodically, in our case every 17 years, not every year. Besides Maryland, Brood X cicadas will be in Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York (somewhat), Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and Washington D.C.

** What's different this time?**

In 2021, Maryland is going to be the epicenter, the ground zero of Brood X emergence. In some areas, there could be as many as 1.5 million cicadas per acre!

** What have they been doing all this time underground and what will they do once they come to the surface?**

For seventeen years, billions of nymph (pre-adult) cicadas have been living underground, feeding off the root systems of trees and plants. They've been busy digging tunnels and building "cells" (where they live). As soon as their collective alarm goes off, they start tunneling up en masse and then look for the nearest plant or tree to climb. Once there, they molt out of their nymph skin to become full adults and the males start singing to attract a mate. After they find the perfect match, the females lay their eggs in slits made in trees or plants. When the eggs hatch, the nymphs fall to the ground and start tunneling down to begin their seventeen-year sojourn as the whole process begins again.

** Should I wear earplugs outside?**

Maybe. Cicada song is noisy and even more so in great numbers. Their mating calls have been recorded from 80 to 100 decibels in volume, the equivalent of a lawnmower engine or a jet flying overhead. They could be so loud, you might be able to hear them in your home with the windows closed!

** Do they sing day and night?**

No, just during the day, usually from 10am - 5pm.

### Will they be all over Maryland?

No, southern Maryland will be cicada-free. You can escape to the shore for some peace and quiet!

### How long do they live above ground?

Although Brood X cicadas are among the longest-living insects, the adults only live about a month once they emerge.

### Do cicadas bite or sting?

No. They don't have jaws or stingers. They do have pointy feet so if they land on you, you might feel something. Cicadas have no interest in people and won't hurt you.

### Are they blind?

No. Cicadas actually have five eyes—two large ones and three tiny ones. The better to see a tree or a mate with.

### Do cicadas stink?

Live cicadas have no smell but dead ones in large numbers can. Be sure to clean your property often.

### Why are there so many of them?

Scientists think that the massive numbers overwhelm their predators, increasing their chances of survival to perpetuate the brood.

### Do animals eat cicadas?

All manner of animals and critters go wild over cicadas and will be feasting like it's a month-long Cicada Festival! Even fish love them (as bait).

### What do cicadas eat?

Cicadas don't eat; they get all their nourishment from drinking tree fluids. Hashem designed their mouths to have slender, straw-like parts to suck the liquids.

### How do they make those sounds?

Only male cicadas make the dominant sound we hear. On their abdomen are special organs called tymbals. These membranes vibrate very quickly when pulled by the cicada's tiny muscles. Females also make a sound by flicking their wings to respond to males. There are five kinds of cicada song, each with its own purpose. The loudest is used to synchronize calls to create group choruses to attract females. Other songs include pre-calls (warming up), calls to attract mates and establish territories, and SOS calls when they're in danger.

### Are cicadas attracted to the sound of lawnmowers and other machinery?

Yes. They're attracted to lawnmowers, weed-whackers, leaf blowers, hedge trimmers, power drills, etc. Anything that's loud and vibrates will draw cicadas. Why? Probably because they think your weed whacker is a super powerful cicada chorusing center. The males want to join it and the females want to meet their mates there.

Projected 2021 Cicada Emergence in the U.S.



