

TOPIC

CICADA PREPAREDNESS

This May, billions of inch-and-a-half-long, red-eyed insects will wake from a seventeen-year subterranean slumber. The swarm known as "Brood II" will overtake the mid-Atlantic, emitting mating songs in 100-decibel surround sound. For humans, it's a plague of biblical proportions, but for cicadas, it's one giant singles bar. Here, what to expect with the lovefest.

CLINT RAINEY

Number of Cicadas Expected to Emerge

1 BILLION

(per square mile)

What They Taste Like

"Soft-shell crab."

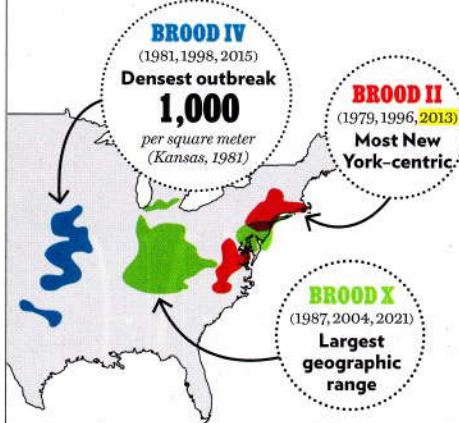
—LOUIS SORKIN, AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY ENTOMOLOGIST

"Cold, canned asparagus."

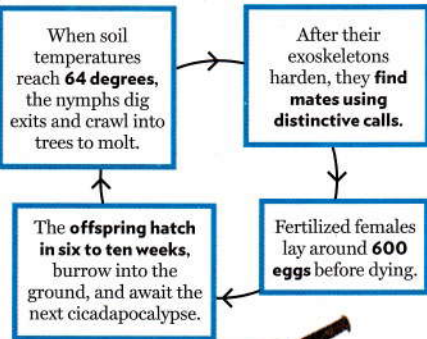
—GENE KRITSKY, AUTHOR OF *PERIODICAL CICADAS: THE PLAGUE AND THE PUZZLE*

Where They Live

Seventeen-year cicadas are identified by twelve geographically distinct broods.



From Cradle to Swarm



What to Know



Avoid midday lawn mowing. Cicadas can confuse the sounds of lawn mowers and other power tools for mating calls.



Nap with earplugs. Cicadas are most active during the day, when their chirps can reach the decibel levels of a jackhammer.



Make cicada pesto. Cicada chef Jenna Jadin recommends trying the newly hatched cicadas, called teneral, which are the most delicate and flavorful.

Cicada Taxonomy

Cicada broods are composed of three different species. A breakdown by cicada expert Gene Kritsky.

Name	Identification	Sounds like ...
Magicicada Septendecim	Largest and noisiest; distinguished by thick orange stripes on its abdomen.	"It's this very hollow flutelike sound," Kritsky says. "You hear it high above everything else."
Magicicada Septendecula	Rarest; small-bodied with thinner orange lines underneath.	"It tends to sound like a rotary sprinkler head."
Magicicada Gassini	Small-bodied and all-black; known to chirp in sync.	"Almost like a shivering sound, like putting wet bacon in a hot frying pan."