

# CICADA “THE SEWING BUG”

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Over the last few weeks, outside my office window, I have been hearing that familiar sound of a long **BuZZZZZZZZZZZZZ**. It could only be one thing. Cicada, the sewing bug. As a child, we used to scare the local girls in the neighborhood by telling them that this very loud, long buzzing sound of the Cicada, was the infamous “Sewing Bug”. It was known to sew little girls fingers and lips together; so we told the neighborhood girls, to get rid of them. They had Koodies anyways. :) So this sound from my childhood, sparked me to write some basic info on one of my favorite childhood insects, the Cicada.

After a couple of years' respite, Cicadas are making a return to a number of states in 2007. Also called the “17 year locust”, Cicada insects, or bugs, arrive by the millions, and can do damage to a variety of young trees and shrubs.

The 2007 Brood will mostly affect Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan and Wisconsin. Most, but not all years, a Cicada brood hatches, affecting anywhere from a small area to several states or more. When a particular brood matures and emerges, it is usually in many millions of insects. Fortunately, their adult life span above ground is very brief, lasting about four to 6 weeks.

Cicada is a flying, plant sucking insect that emerges in period cycles. Nymphs suck juices from roots of plants. Egg laying females cause significant damage to trees during their brief, adult stage. They are not harmful to humans, and do not bite or “sew” in any way.

**There are two basic types of Cicadas:**

**2-8 year Periodic cycle** - These insects “seem” to appear every year in some areas, because their life cycle is staggered. Actually, a different brood is hatching each year to make it seem like they are annual.

**13 to 17 year cycle** - This group does not appear every year. When they do emerge, it is huge numbers. They are sometimes called “17 Year Locusts”. Although, they are not related to locusts at all.

While the Cicada’s life span may be as long as 17 years, they spend almost all of their lives underground. Cicada nymphs emerge from the ground in periodic cycles. They climb up trees and quickly shed their skins(molt). An adult, flying cicada emerges. The adult Cicadas' entire purpose in life is to mate and produce offspring. You can hear the males' mating “song” from early morning to nightfall. In heavily infested areas, the noise can be quite disturbing. About five to ten days after mating, the female lands on twigs of deciduous trees, cuts slits in them, and lays her eggs in the slit. Adults do not eat. Rather, damage to trees is caused by the adult female as she cuts slices in twigs to lay her eggs. Shortly after mating, the male Cicada dies. The eggs hatch, producing tiny nymphs that fall to the ground. These nymphs burrow into the soil and feast on underground roots. They remain there for years, slowly growing, until their periodic cycle calls them to emerge again as adults.

