

# Life Cycle of a Cicada



# CICADAS

## Stages of Growth



Eggs are about the same size and shape as these grains of rice.



Nymphs hatch from eggs and burrow under the ground. Nymphs stay underground from 1-17 years depending on the species.



Adult emerges from exoskeleton.



The adult cicada scratches grooves in tree branches then lays eggs inside the grooves. After 6 to 8 weeks the eggs hatch and the tiny nymphs begin feeding on the tree's sap.

The newly hatched nymphs drop to the ground and begin burying themselves into the soil. The grooves carved into branches can cause the branch to die off and fall to the ground. This makes it easier for the nymphs to get to the soil.



The newly hatched nymphs bury themselves into the soil and burrow down until they reach the roots of plants to feed on.

The cicada nymphs will remain underground for a number of years. (Between 1 and 17 years depending on their species.)

When they are fully developed the nymphs dig their way out of the soil at night and climb up into the open. They attach themselves to trees, walls, anywhere they can find a sheltered spot. Then they prepare to shed their skin.





The cicada pumps fluid underneath their exoskeleton (outer skin) to help it begin to separate from their body. A split in the exoskeleton begins to appear on their backs between the eyes. The cicada pushes its head out through the split and slowly wriggles its body free. This can take about one and a half hours. The new adult is soft shelled and light coloured. The true colour of the cicada develops as the new skin dries and begins to harden.



## *Have you ever wondered why cicadas make such a loud noise?*

Adult cicadas have only 4-6 weeks to find a mate and lay eggs before they die. Cicadas make noises to help them find a mate. The male cicada 'sings' to attract a female.

Male cicadas have a pair of sound organs on the sides of their abdomens called tymbals. By using their muscles, they rapidly vibrate the tymbals to make their mating calls.

Female cicadas don't sing but they do answer the male's calls. Females don't have sound organs so they flick their wings to answer the male's calls.



Some species of cicadas are very loud! The loudest species can reach noise levels as high as 120 decibels at close range. That's as loud as a chainsaw!



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