

## ***Uncommon Invertebrates***

### **The Cicada by Nadine Scott**

Latin name: Cicadoidea

Diet: Herbivore:

Group: Cloud, plague



As a youngster, when we made our own games and fun, I would look for cicada shells. The shells were often muddy, but I didn't know why. Now, I know that their life cycle involves a period of living in the soil.

There are annual cicadas, which are seen very year and periodic ones which spend most of their life underground. Brood cycles can last from 13 to 17 years. With the over-lapping broods, some are seen every year. Annual cicadas can be found all over the world, but the periodicals are unique to North America. Their broods are mainly in the central and eastern regions of the United States. This was a particularly bad year in parts of Virginia and North Carolina as Brood IX emerged in May and June.

The life cycle has three stages: eggs, nymphs, and adults. The female can lay up to 400 eggs moving around to dozens of sites, usually branches, or twigs. From six to 10 weeks the nymphs hatch and dig themselves into the ground. They suck the liquids from plant roots. They remain in underground burrows before molting and surfacing. The adults mate and lay eggs, so the cycle begins anew.

Even in ancient times, the cicada was fascinating. Some viewed them as symbols of rebirth. Early Chinese folklore considered them high-status creatures. They were represented in art and embroidery.

As a resident of North Carolina until the age of six, the adults would say, "it's going to be a hot one," when a cicada was sounding off. This was in the heat and humidity of summer. The sound is like a loud vibration.

The funniest incident with a cicada was when I had a Siamese cat. She went out on the upstairs deck and came back to the door to be admitted. I did not realize she had caught a cicada in her mouth and came running in with it sounding off—loud and clear. Her whole body seems to be vibrating and her eyes were twice the normal size. She did not know what to do with it! I was able to catch the cat and remove the cicada to live another day.

Photos: [ces.ncsu.edu](http://ces.ncsu.edu) / Steve Schoof, NCSU

References:

National Geographic

Wikipedia

[content.ces.ncsu.edu/periodical-cicada](http://content.ces.ncsu.edu/periodical-cicada)

[cicadamania.com/cicadas/brood-ix-9-will-emerge-in-2020-in-north-carolina-virginia-and-west-virginia/](http://cicadamania.com/cicadas/brood-ix-9-will-emerge-in-2020-in-north-carolina-virginia-and-west-virginia/)

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