

Periodical Cicada Emergence 2024: A Guide for Missouri

Possibly this week, Missouri will witness a natural phenomenon: the emergence of Brood XIX. Brood XIII is also emerging in Northern Illinois and a few surrounding states. Here's what you need to know:



An Uncommon Event

- While periodical cicada emergences don't happen every year, they aren't uncommon. Dual brood emergences are less common. This particular emergence is unique because both 13- and 17-year cicadas will emerge, and they are adjacent broods.
- Brood XIX (a 13-year cicada brood) hasn't emerged alongside Brood XIII (a 17-year cicada brood) since 1803! The next time these two broods emerge together will be in another 221 years.
- Brood XIX is possibly the largest geographically brood, blanketing most of Missouri, and reaching into 15 states. They are likely to start emerging in late April and the adults will be active for about 4-6 weeks.

Understanding Periodical Cicadas

- Periodical cicadas spend most of their lives underground (13-17 years!) emerging to reproduce.
- Periodical cicadas don't bite or sting and are actually a valuable food source for birds and small mammals.
- The buzzing we will hear is the males' synchronized singing to attract mates. It's loud (-100 decibels) and typically fades away at dusk.

Interesting tidbits

- Periodical cicadas are different from annual cicadas. Periodical cicadas have a much longer life cycle, are smaller, black with red eyes, and are only found in the eastern half of the USA.
- Citizen science projects like Cicada Safari and iNaturalist help us learn more about these interesting insects, especially their brood ranges.

Living with periodical cicadas

- Though there will be many cicadas, healthy mature trees will be fine. Flagging (broken twigs at the edges of the tree branches) will occur a few weeks after the periodical cicadas disappear.
- Protect young trees (planted within the last 5 years) with cheesecloth or netting with openings no larger than ¼ inch.
- Pesticides are mostly ineffective and can be harmful to birds and beneficial insects.

MythBusters

- This isn't the "largest emergence ever." However, Brood XIX is arguably the largest brood geographically and with another brood emerging the same year, there will be a *lot* of cicadas over a broad geographical area.
- There will not be twice as many cicadas. While there are two broods emerging, their ranges do not overlap except for a small area in Illinois.
- While not occurring often, dual emergences happen occasionally. This *specific* 17-year and 13-year pairing hasn't occurred since 1803.
- Cicadas are not locusts. Locusts are swarming grasshoppers.

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