

A big brood of cicadas is forecast to emerge from the ground this spring along the East Coast. AP

Waiting in the wings this spring: Cicadas!

A big brood is expected in East

By Doyle Rice
USA Today

A big "brood" of cicadas — which has been biding its time underground — is forecast to emerge from the ground this spring along the East Coast.

"Spectacular" and "amazing" are two of the words used by University of Maryland entomologist Michael Raupp to describe the East's biggest influx of the bugs since 2004.

This year's emergence should be quite extensive, as the critters will likely come out from the Carolinas to the Hudson Valley of New York, said John Cooley, a research scientist from the University of Connecticut.

"All the East Coast cities are in the path of the cicadas," said Cooley, who runs the magicicada.org website, and requests reports from people who see cicadas this spring.

The emergence could include parts or all of the New York metropolitan area, whose nearly 20 million inhabitants might have to contend with swarms of cicadas, which can number as many as 1 billion bugs per square mile. Historically, this brood has been seen in the Bronx, Cooley said, and the bugs could also come out in Central Park.

"The greater New York metro area is going to rock with cicadas," Raupp said.

They should emerge in the South in late April or May and in the cooler states in the North by the latter half of May and into early June, he added. Unfortunately, this is just in time for prime wedding season.

"The timing depends on the weather," said Dan Mozgai, a cicada enthusiast from Metuchen, N.J. "They typically emerge when the soil temperature reaches 64 degrees."

Mozgai is the founder of the website cicadamania.com.

There are at least 15 cycles, or "broods," of periodical cicadas, some of which emerge every 17 years, while others emerge every 13 years. Different broods of cicadas emerge in different parts of the eastern half of the U.S. in different years. Other species of cicadas show up every summer. The bugs have only been seen as far west as Texas and Oklahoma.

This year's group is known as "Brood II." The previous big cicada emergence in the East was 2004's "Brood X."

Cicadas are harmless, though males can make a loud buzz when they're alarmed, and they're big enough to startle humans. The largest can have 3-inch wingspans. Young, small trees can be damaged when females deposit their eggs inside branches, so they can be a problem for fruit orchards, Cooley said.

An adult cicada usually lives for about two to four weeks, Mozgai said. This is a long time to wait after spending 17 years underground: They admittedly have "a pretty dismal life," Cooley said.

90 DECIBELS

In order to attract females, male cicadas emit a deafening chorus that is as loud as a lawnmower.