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**I**n almost every forest in India you can hear the hum or the song of cicada. The male cicadas sing using special structures on their abdomen, tymbals, to attract the female cicada. The best way to identify a cicada is by their songs. Each species has its distinct, special song.

Cicadas are small flying, sap-sucking insects, with transparent wings. There are 2,000 species of cicadas in Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and North America. Scientists all over the world are interested in cicadas' seasonal appearance.

Like the bamboo or kurunji flowers, some species appear only in 13 or 17 year cycles.

When many cicadas of a species emerge, courtship soon begins. The male cicadas sing their song to find an interested female in the crowd. Soon after they mate, the female makes a small slit on a tree and lays a purse of up to 400 eggs. The adult

male and female die soon after. The nymphs hatch from eggs in about seven weeks, drop to the ground and bury into the earth. They live under the soil for many years, growing through various stages of moulting and gradually get ready to emerge.



Some cicadas are present throughout the year. Even in these species, the nymphs spend at least four years underground. They gradually burrow their way to the top and emerge as the earth warms up in summer.

The cicadas' chief enemy is the cicada - killer wasp. The wasp

catches and paralyzes the cicada, then drags it into an underground burrow. It lays eggs on the cicadas and the emerging larva feed on the cicada!

There is so much about cicadas that we are still learning. You can help the world to understand Indian cicadas better by studying them in your locality.