



Cicada - What does a cicada look like?

Fact

- A cicada has three very different looks for the different stages of its life
- First it starts off as an egg about the size of a grain of rice.
- When it hatches it is a creamy white nymph (nimf) with 4 little legs and two big pincer-like ones at the front, a bit like crab's claws
- When it becomes an adult cicada, it loses the pincer-like legs at the front and instead has 6 little legs and four wings which are totally see through except for the veins running through them. An adult cicada's colour depends on the type of cicada it is – they're usually green or black or brown.

Do you know

- Nymph is the name given to baby insects
- Cicada eggs are laid in the bark of trees by the female cicada.
- When the nymph hatches out of the egg it drops out of the tree and onto the ground. It uses its big front claws to tunnel into the ground where it stays for up to 17 years for some species of cicada!
- Underground the cicada eats the sap from tree roots using its rostrum which is like two straws in one. It spits saliva down one straw onto the tree root to break it down and then uses the other straw to suck up the root juices. Charming!
- Adult cicadas don't seem to eat much.
- The noise that an adult cicada makes is made by the male and is his way of attracting a girlfriend.
- It's pretty tricky to tell the difference between male and female cicadas but the female has a sharper, pointy "bottom" than the males because she has an ovipositor for laying eggs with.

Experiments you can do

What can you eat with a straw?

Cicada's eat using a rostrum which works like a straw. When you're sitting down to your next meal have a look at what you're eating and see how much of it you would be able to eat sucking it up through a straw.

Straws really only work with liquids, don't they? There is one way you could eat your sandwich through a straw and that's to liquefy it in a blender or food processor. That's sort of what cicada nymphs do when they're under the ground with tree roots. Fancy some liquid fish and chips anyone?

Other Investigations

Summer singing

We have over 20 different species of cicada in New Zealand. Different parts of New Zealand only have certain types. The type of cicada in my back yard might be different from the type of cicada in your back yard. Adult cicadas are only found in the summer months too. They leave their underground tunnels as the days get longer and warmer in search of partner. The male cicada is the one that makes all the noise trying to attract a girlfriend.

See if you can hunt down a cicada in summer time. If you move quietly and slowly you can get quite close without scaring them away. The cicada's in my backyard are quite big (about 4.5 centimetres long) how big are the ones in your back yard, roughly.

Jokes

Why couldn't the cicada sing?

He was a sick-cada