

Massachusetts wildlife experts believe to have found cause of recent spate of bird deaths across the U.S.

2 weeks ago the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife asked the public for help in reporting songbird deaths and to stop using birdbaths/feeders.

In late May, wildlife managers in Washington D.C., Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and Kentucky began receiving reports of sick and dying birds with eye swelling and crusty discharge, as well as neurological signs.

Before long, additional reports had been received from Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana. While the majority of affected birds are reported to be fledgling common grackles, blue jays, European starlings, and American robins, other species of songbirds have been reported as well.

While there were no cases of the illness or cicadas in Massachusetts wildlife experts suggested holding off putting up bird feeders. No definitive cause(s) of illness or death had been determined at that time.

Now, experts believe they have pinned down the cause of the mysterious and deadly disease: they believe the outbreak is related to cicadas emerging in different parts of the Eastern seaboard this summer. Ingesting the insects could be having toxic effects on the birds.