

Fireflies

HAVE YOU EVER wondered about fireflies—those smallish beetles that flicker on summer evenings? There are more than 2,000 different species of fireflies worldwide!

Fireflies—in some places known as lightning bugs—have a fascinating life cycle. After mating, most fireflies lay their eggs in the ground. Very few lay their eggs in the water or on plants. After a few weeks, the eggs hatch, and the larvae live underground, where they eat various other small creatures. In Michigan, where I live, they overwinter below the frost line underground, then come back up in the spring.

I grew up on a farm, and I remember my dad plowing one of our more low-lying fields at night. He came back home to tell us to come out with him to the field, where he would show us something amazing. Once we got there, he started up the tractor, plowed a couple of passes, then shut off the tractor lights again. It was incredible! The ground glimmered with the soft light of disturbed glowworms, which are actually firefly larvae. Yes, firefly larvae emit a glow even while living in the dirt. It was incredible to see!



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Once the larvae mature, they go into a pupa stage for one to three weeks, then emerge as the adults that we are used to seeing. Here in Michigan, we have more than 15 species of fireflies. Many people know that a firefly flashes to find a mate. We most commonly notice them during this brief adulthood cycle. What many people do not know is that you can tell which species a firefly is by how often it flashes! Fireflies are attracted only to those that flash their abdomens at the same rate.

You can have fun with the fireflies at night. Go out with a flashlight and, by covering and uncovering the lens with your hand, try to match the rate of flash that you see in the fireflies. If you do it successfully, they will often respond nearly in unison—when you flash, they respond with a flash. You can even adjust your timing to get other species to respond.

The fascinating thing to me about fireflies is that even the larvae glow underground where the glow is not seen by others. This can be a great lesson for us. We know it's important to let our light shine when people are watching, but having the Holy Spirit in us means that we will let our light shine even when no one is watching—especially when we find ourselves in “the dirt.”

Be like a firefly: let your light shine all the time! 