

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Look for it now in Southwest Ohio!

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"Firefly Larva" by Nevit Dilmen, CC BY-SA 3.0



"Common Eastern Firefly" by Katja Schulz, CC BY 2.0

Common Eastern Firefly (*Photinus pyralis*)

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Coming soon to light up the night near you- the firefly or lightning bug! This species is actually a type of beetle. Just like the winged cicadas (in their adult form), we are going to see the adult form of fireflies very soon! Once they emerge, they will be around for about two months. When they are in their larval stage underground, they eat worms and other insects. When they are in the adult stage above ground, they eat plants and pollen.

Fireflies use bioluminescence to light up and they actually are able to control it as a way to communicate with other fireflies. What are they saying? Well, they are typically looking for a mate! It also is a warning to things that want to eat them that they are not on the menu! The male's lantern, or the area that lights up, is bigger than the female's lantern. Males also like to fly higher, while the females lay low to the ground.

To learn more about this species, visit Firefly.org.

FUN FACTS

- They spend up to two years as larvae but only live for a couple of weeks as adults
- There are more than 2,000 species of fireflies worldwide
- The Common Eastern Firefly is the most prevalent in SW Ohio
- Each species has its own unique pattern of flashes
- Females of the *Photuris* genus will mimic *Photinus* genus flash patterns to lure in unsuspecting males. Rather than mating, these "femme fatales" eat them!
- Some species of fireflies use pheromones to communicate instead of flashing light
- Firefly populations are threatened by light pollution, habitat loss, and pesticide use