

### **Some of our female fireflies can't fly**

It seems that of the species of *Atyphella* we know of in eastern Australia, the females we know of can't fly. All except the Blue Mountains firefly which has shorter hind wings (the ones they use to fly with) in all but one specimen I have seen, where those wings were long enough to enable the insect to fly.

The female lays the eggs and ensures the next generation, and if she can't fly, or has very limited movement, then those eggs are going to be laid in a very restricted area. What that means for us is that when all those adults emerge in our firefly season they will all be in that restricted area and we will get a wonderful display as they are so concentrated. Sometimes as we have already seen those are quite small areas as it will not be the female able to disperse the species more widely but accidental occurrences like flooding.

But what about the species with females that can fly? My first glimpse of *Australoluciola australis* (Joseph Banks' firefly) was along a river bank near Gladstone and I saw many males in flight. I did not investigate to see how far they extended along the riverside (having been warned to watch for crocs). Other sightings of this species in mangroves were of individuals rather than a massed display. Mostly my experience with species having flighted females is that I see only isolated males. They will of course be able to breed (as long as conditions are appropriate) across a much wider area. Whether they ever appear in large congregations we hope to find out from the observations on this site.