

Fireflies do have a mouth and very specialised jaws that allow them to actually drink the juices of their prey.

They have a pair of jaws (mandibles) which are curved and slender and have a long hollow tube that runs along inside the jaws opening just behind the pointed tip. These channels are connected to the salivary glands and also to their alimentary system, so it is possible for the firefly to actually inject both saliva and digestive enzymes into their prey via their jaws.

Like spiders they actually immobilise their prey first!

A firefly larva feeding on a snail may nip and nip repeatedly, with the snail retreating into its shell at each nip, and the firefly larva waiting patiently on the shell for it to relax and come out of its shell again. It may be that larvae collaborate in nipping and paralysing if the prey is large.

Finally all that nipping and injecting of substances paralyses the snail which is then incapable of retreating into its shell and it is consumed live!

The larva can now inject digestive enzymes via those channels in its jaws into the snail host, and liquefy the material which can then be sucked up along those same channels.

I hope their behaviour as carnivorous larvae does not spoil your appreciation of the wonder of the adult flashing patterns.