Night Life

The Firefly

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*The firefly's flame is something for which science has no name
I can think of nothing eerier
Than flying around with an unidentified glow on a
person's posterier.*

– Ogden Nash

Ogden Nash perhaps was unaware of the term 'bioluminescence'. The glowing light is a result of a chemical reaction inside the body of this beetle (the firefly is not a fly) involving oxygen, magnesium, ATP molecules and luciferin in presence of the enzyme luciferase. In many species of fireflies, adult males flash in order to attract females using a flashing pattern unique to their species. Communication by visual signals is almost automatically assigned to diurnal animals. The firefly is a notable exception in being nocturnal, yet communicating visually. While crickets are a part of the night's orchestra, the fireflies are the ones that light-up the night.

Photo Credit: Natasha Mhatre

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