

# FIREFLIES

From a distance you see a tree all lighted up at night and you wonder whether somebody has set it afire. You expect the flames to leap to the surrounding trees and bushes but as you approach it you note that the tree is not on fire. Fireflies are flitting about the tree. Like a string of tiny electric bulbs wound all around the tree, they light up the tree.

Fireflies are not flies but beetles. They belong to the order Coleoptera. The adult fireflies are about half an inch long and are dull colored. Their bodies are softer than the other beetles.

The wingless females and the larvae are called "glow-worms". Their luminescence which is accompanied by almost no heat is one of the marvels of nature. They have a row of luminous spots on several segments of the body which flash light intermittently. These enable them to find their mates even in the dark.

Fireflies have mouth parts adapted for sucking juices from plants and small insects. They feed voraciously on plant lice.

Larvae are usually found in wet decaying logs feeding on vegetable matter.