Living Lights

Day 1 · Nonfiction · Grade 3

Name _____ Date _____

On a summer night, you might see tiny lights blinking in the grass. These lights come from fireflies. Fireflies are a kind of beetle, and they can make their own light. When a living thing makes its own light, it is called bioluminescence (bye-oh-loo-mih-NESS-ens).

How do fireflies glow? Inside a firefly's body, special chemicals mix together. This mixing gives off light but almost no heat, so the glow is sometimes called "cold light." Fireflies flash their lights in patterns to find and signal to each other. Different kinds of fireflies use different patterns.

Most glowing living things are found in the ocean. Deep in the sea, sunlight cannot reach, so it is very dark. Some jellyfish glow when they are bumped. The sudden glow may startle an animal that wants to eat them.

The anglerfish lives deep in the ocean, too. It has a long spine on its head with a glowing tip, like a fishing pole with a light on the end. Small fish swim toward the light, and the anglerfish snaps them up.

Some mushrooms can glow as well! In damp forests, a few kinds of mushrooms give off a soft green light at night. Scientists are still learning about living lights and how people might use them in the future.

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