



Tales from a Sisters Naturalist by Jim Anderson

Bioluminescence in the West

Every once in a while — and often enough that it leaves me feeling like a dunce — I meet up with something in the world of nature I didn't even have a clue existed. Like that click beetle with headlights.

It came about it in the late '70s thanks to a high school kid in Sierra Vista High School in southeast Arizona, when I was manager of Ramsey Canyon Preserve. The Preserve was then the "Hummingbird Capitol of the World," nestled in the Huachuca (Wah-choo-kah) Mountains just north of Bisbee.

Leonard Taylor and my son Dean got to be pals as they walked up Ramsey Canyon Road from where the school bus dropped them off. Leonard lived at the mouth of the canyon, while Dean lived with Sue and me

in the manager's house at the upper end of the road.

Leonard was, by birth I think, a most curious young man, and his dear parents did nothing to discourage that intense desire to know who and what was where in the Huachuca Mountains. (Leonard's gone on to become a leading author and contributor of field guides to the backcountry of southeast Arizona with his "Trails of the Huachucas").

All this led to the phone ringing on a delightful summer night.

I picked up the receiver, and without fanfare or introduction a voice shouted, "Jim! Ya' gotta' come down here right now and see what I've found!" I recognized the voice and started to ask Leonard what it was that he was so excited about, but all I heard was a definitive "click."

I shouted to Dean and Sue, "I just got a call from Leonard, and he's got something-or-another by the neck, or it's dragging him all around the yard!" With that, we jumped into our old VW camper and took off down the road.

When we rolled into Leonard's yard I could see someone with a flashlight bent over in the shrubs, either following or chasing — or being chased — by something. "Well it doesn't

look too big to handle..." I said as we piled out of the VW and charged across his lawn toward the waving flashlight.

"It's over here," Leonard shouted, and over "here" we went.

"Look... look," he shouted again, "Right there! It's got lights!"

Sure enough, as we all got closer to the object he was holding the beam of the flashlight near we could see a tiny yellowish light moving on the back side of a yucca leaf. But as we got closer the one light became two, and as we finally closed in on Leonard's creature it turned out to be an adult click beetle with headlights on its thorax.

"Holy cats! "I thought. "Fireflies I know — but lighted click beetles I do not."

The fireflies of my childhood days back east were always a delight, and it never even occurred to me that, right off the start, the very name was incorrect. Fireflies are NOT flies, they are BEETLES. Just like the old saying, "Not all insects are bugs, but all bugs are insects."

Lightning bugs are not "bugs" either, they're also in the zoological order, Coleoptera: beetles, but commonly called "fireflies" or "lightning bugs" for their



PHOTO BY JIM ANDERSON

Surprise! A click beetle that glows in the dark!

conspicuous use of bioluminescence: capacity to create chemical light, a "cold light," without infrared, or ultraviolet frequencies.

There are about 2,000 species of fireflies found in temperate and tropical environments, many in marshes or in wet, wooded areas where the larvae have abundant sources of food. The larvae emit light and are often called "glow worms."

OK, I knew about "glow worms," but had no idea there are so many species of fireflies, not to mention glowing click beetles.

There was a really great exhibit at the High Desert Museum last June that Sue and I missed; it took place right at the apex of our golden eagle fieldwork.

The exhibit explored how and why some living organisms produce light through a chemical reaction in their bodies.

Visitors learned about a chemical process that produces cool light and explored the world of light-producing terrestrial organisms like fireflies, glow-worms and fungi — and I missed it all. Weep, oh weep!

With our Earth warming, and Mexican birds and butterflies fluttering all about Texas, New Mexico and Arizona, it my not be too unrealistic to start looking around on the coming summer nights to see if there are any bioluminescent insects wandering around Sisters Country, lighting things up.

The Belfry

Feb. 17 / Wed. / 7 PM
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Sisters MOVIE HOUSE

STARTS FRIDAY
FRI., FEB. 19 – THURS., FEB. 25

Race (PG-13)
Fri 4:15, 7:00
Sat 1:45, 4:15, 7:00
Sun 1:00, 3:30, 6:15
Mon-Thurs 3:30, 6:15

Zoolander 2 (PG-13)
Fri 5:00, 7:30
Sat 2:30, 5:00, 7:30
Sun 2:00, 4:30, 6:45
Mon-Thurs 4:15, 6:30

How to Be Single (R)
Fri 4:45, 7:15
Sat 2:15, 4:45, 7:15
Sun 1:30, 3:45, 6:00
Mon-Thurs 4:00, 6:15

Hail Caesar (PG-13)
Fri 4:15, 6:45
Sat 1:45, 4:15, 6:45
Sun 1:00, 3:15, 5:45
Mon-Thurs 3:45, 6:00

Movie times and titles are subject to change. Visit website or call for latest information.
WWW.SISTERSMOVIEHOUSE.COM
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SISTERS

Live Entertainment, Arts & Special Events

Wed.~Feb. 17
The Belfry Live Music with Tommy Castro & The Painkillers 7 to 10 p.m. \$20 online at bendticket.com or \$25 at the door. Irresistible contemporary blues-rock. For more info: belfryevents.com.

Friday~Feb. 19
FivePine Conference Center Annual Sisters Area Chamber of Commerce Awards Ceremony 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. \$35 per person. Purchase tickets in advance at the chamber. For more information: 541-549-0251 or jeri@sisterscountry.com.

Saturday~Feb. 20
Sisters High School 5th Annual Sister Science Fair noon to 4 p.m. Free for all ages! The event is sponsored by the Sisters Science Club, featuring experiments, 3D printer, planetarium, robots, inventions & more! For info: sistersscienceclub.org.

Sunday~Feb. 21
Sisters Community Church Annual Mr. SHS Pasta Feed 6 p.m. It's the annual fundraiser for Sisters FAN, with dessert auction, and auction for services provided. Just \$5 per person (under 5 free). For information call 541-549-4045.

Monday~Feb. 22
Sisters High School 19th Annual Coffee House Benefit 7 to 9 p.m. Art demos, silent auction, hands-on stations, live entertainment and more from SHS students! \$5 entry goes to SHS arts programs & scholarship. For more information contact Bethany, 541-549-4045 x1012.

Tuesday~Feb. 23
The Belfry Sisters Science Club Lecture 6 p.m. Jon Renner presents "Science & Society." \$5 (free to students, teachers & club donors). For additional information go online to sistersscienceclub.org.

Wed.~Feb. 24
Sisters High School Gym "Concussions in School Sports" 7 p.m. Retired neurologist Dr. Robert Collins will speak, sponsored by the Sisters Science Club & SHS Athletic Dept. Free and open to all; *required for athletes & families in SHS spring sports.* For additional information call Tim Roth at 541-549-4045.

Friday~Feb. 26
Cork Cellars Live Music! 7 to 9 p.m. No cover! For more information call 541-549-2675 or go to corkcellars.com.
FivePine Conference Center Sisters Christian Academy Annual Benefit Auction 6 p.m. Silent, live & dessert auctions, hearty appetizers & no-host bar. Incredible auction items! \$30pp or \$325 reserved table for 10. 541-549-4133 or info@sisterschristianacademy.com.

Saturday~Feb. 27
Sisters High School Sisters Folk Festival Winter Concert with Bumper Jacks 7 p.m. The hot and sweet sounds of America's story. For additional information or tickets call 541-549-4979 or go to sistersfolkfestival.org.
Caldera Arts Center Open Studio at Blue Lake 1 to 3 p.m. Free to the public. Meet the Artists in Residence! For more info go to calderaarts.org or call 541-595-0956.
The Belfry Live Music with Brothers Comatose and The Easy Leaves 8 to 11 p.m. \$15 online at bendticket.com or \$18 at the door. Americana, folk & bluegrass from this 5-piece string bad. For more information go to belfryevents.com or call 541-815-9122.

Deadline to submit items for the Events Calendar is 5 p.m. Fridays. Email teresa@nuggetnews.com