

# Conservation Corner

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June 29, 2016

Last weekend we drove across the state to catch a couple of the grandkids' baseball games. Well, Leah caught and Evan covered second base. It's always fun watching young people learning and enjoying the game of baseball. On Saturday morning, we caught the ever popular Freight House Farmer's Market on West River Drive in Davenport – plenty of tasty tidbits of summer for everyone.

While downtown, we also stopped by the Figge Art Museum. Some of our favorite exhibits in their permanent collections included furniture by Frank Lloyd Wright and oil paintings by Grant Wood. Also showing were two special summer exhibits. In the Wonderful World of Oz, we followed the yellow brick road from Kansas to the Emerald City and back home again. In Picturing the Prairie, we followed the beauty of the prairie through the seasons via the photographs, water colors, and sculptures of six area artists. Though the tallgrass prairie that once stretched across North America has mostly been replaced by cultivated fields, the prairie continues to fascinate naturalists, farmers, gardeners, and artists.

One exhibit that caught my eye was a video of fireflies by award-winning artist Radim Schreiber. Perhaps you've seen his images of these glowing insects on the Weather Channel, Iowa Public Television, or in National Geographic publications. I encourage everyone to check out his photos at [www.fireflyexperience.org](http://www.fireflyexperience.org), especially the video of fireflies lighting up the night in the prairie of Lamson Woods State Preserve near Schreiber's home in Fairfield, Iowa.



Scientifically speaking, lightning bugs or fireflies are neither bugs nor flies but rather soft-bodied beetles in the order Coleoptera. Over 2,000 species make up the family Lampyridae, from the Greek word *lampien* meaning “to shine.”

And shine they do in colors of yellow, light red, green, and orange. With almost 100% of their chemical energy emitted as light, fireflies produce the most efficient light ever made, especially compared to incandescent lamps at 10% efficiency. And while not all species light up, those that do send their flashing patterns of light to attract mates and also to warn predators of their bad taste. Did you know that some firefly eggs and larvae are also bioluminescent, glowing underground or underwater as glow worms?

Radim Schreiber explains his dedication to documenting fireflies in their natural environments as follows: “Growing up in the Czech Republic, I hadn't seen many fireflies before. It was very magical when I saw thousands of them in Iowa for the first time. For me, fireflies are the light in the dark.”

“When I walk through a quiet forest in the middle of the night full of fireflies, I experience a magical forest. When I see fireflies as a mere reflection of stars under the Milky Way, I feel connected to everything in the universe. They are communicating to me; I am listening.”

Today fireflies are in decline due to light pollution, pesticide use, and loss of habitat. I'll close with two questions. What's your connection to nature? Are you listening?