

the NATURALIST CORNER

Brought to you by Peggy Potts
Coastal Master Naturalist

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As a graduate of the Coastal Master Naturalist Program offered through the Clemson University Cooperative Extension, I would like to share my excitement and enthusiasm about the many wonders of nature that can be enjoyed and experienced in the lowcountry. Through this monthly column, I will share my observations, sightings, and characteristics about a variety of nature topics, such as common insects, migrating birds and butterflies, wildflowers and plants and more. Basically, anything in nature is fair game to learn about and explore.

I also encourage you to share your observations and experiences so that we can learn about our natural world together. Please feel free to send in pictures and/or information of anything you find interesting by emailing me, Peggy Potts, at ppotts@charlestoncounty.org.

The Vanishing Firefly! By: Peggy Potts



Most of us have many happy childhood memories of catching fireflies at dusk, putting them in a jar by our beds, and releasing them the next day. Fireflies were a sign that summer had

finally arrived. But where have all of the fireflies gone?

Fireflies are disappearing from marshes, fields and forests all over the country and the world.

Nobody knows for sure why the firefly is vanishing. But many scientists believe it involves two factors: development and light pollution. Most fireflies are found in fields, forests and marshes. They gravitate toward warm, humid environments and like water such as ponds, streams and rivers, and even shallow standing water.

Loss of habitat due to increased development is one of the reasons scientists believe that fireflies are disappearing. Logging, pollution and an increased use of pesticides may also contribute to the dwindling number of fireflies. Fireflies use their lights to communicate. They use their

lights to attract mates, defend their territory and ward off predators. Human light pollution interrupts the natural firefly flash patterns and make it difficult for fireflies to signal each other during mating. There are some things we can do to help such as:

- Turning off outside lights at night so that they won't interrupt the breeding cycle.
- Allowing some leaves from trees to accumulate to give firefly larvae a place to grow.
- Building a small pond or diverting a small stream to run through your property.
 - Avoiding the use of pesticides and weed killers.
 - Talking to your neighbors and educating them about the dwindling firefly problem. Spreading the word will help increase firefly habitat.

If you are lucky enough to see fireflies in your yard, treasure the experience. Let it take you back to childhood and remember how important it is to preserve these magical creatures.



Charleston County Greenbelt Program

Places you might see fireflies are in the Francis Marion National Forest. The Greenbelt Program has provided funding for several properties in the Forest. For additional information, visit the Greenbelt Program website at <http://charlestoncountygreenbelt.org> and follow us on Instagram and the County's Facebook page. Don't forget you can earn "Lifestyle Loot" through the Wellness Program when you visit a Greenbelt site and post pictures using #ccgreenbelt.