

**WHAT'S INSIDE A BLACK HOLE?**  
Fuzzball, ice wall or unexploded bomb

# NewScientist

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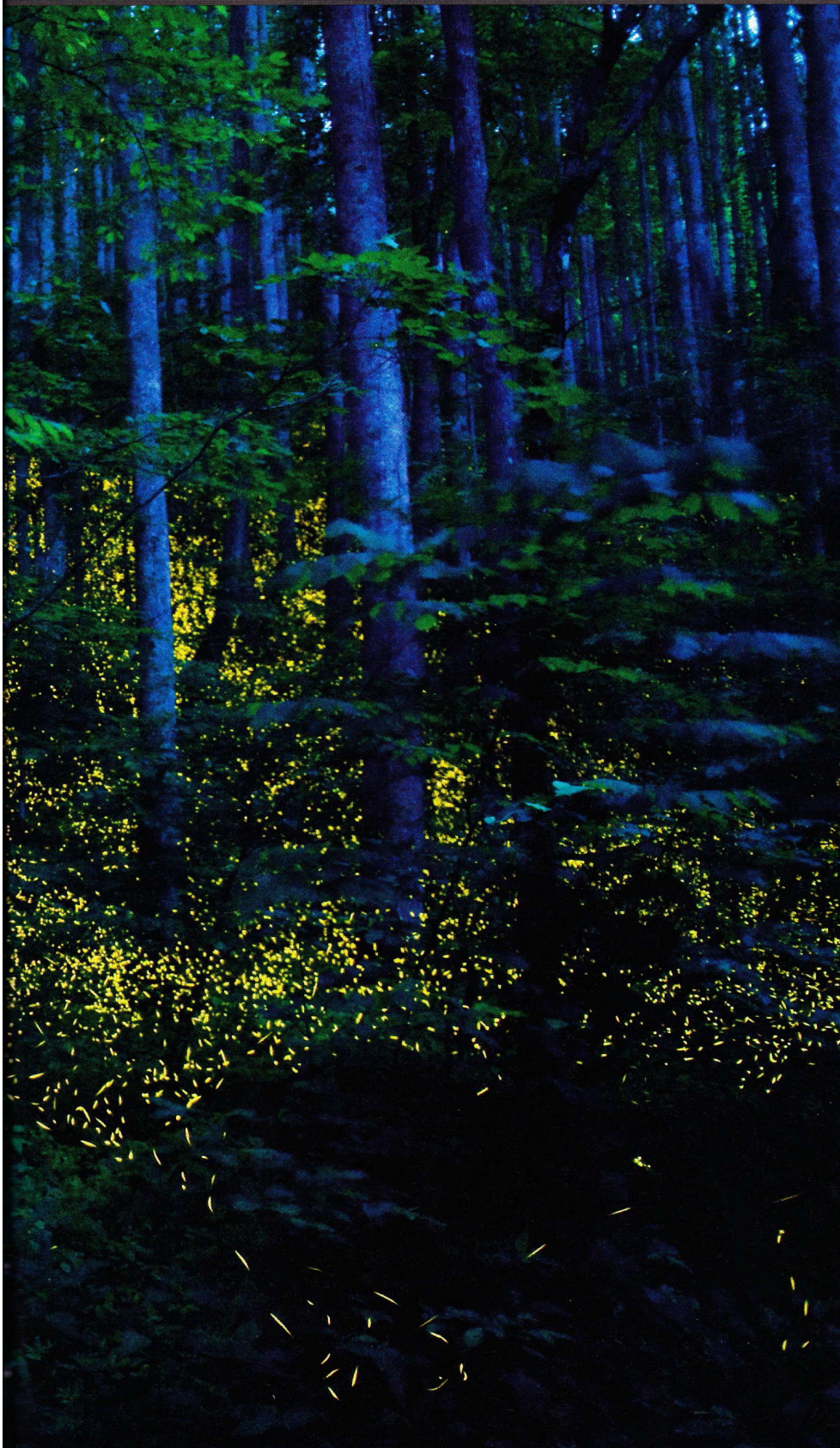
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# APERTURE





## Flashing for sex

WANT to know the difference between a firefly and a glow-worm? First, they aren't flies or worms - both of them are beetles. In some species, only the larvae or females glow, and these wingless individuals are known as glow-worms. In other species, males and females both have wings and emit a luminescent display - these are called fireflies, or lightning bugs.

The insects shot here by Belgian photographer Katrien Vermeire are fireflies in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee. The pictures are part of a sequence of work under the name *Godspeed* - an expression used by one of the forest rangers she spent time with.

In this species (*Photinus carolinus*) the light show is particularly remarkable because the males - sometimes thousands at a time - synchronise their flashes. In the dark pause between flashes, the females reply with their own, dimmer signals.

Why do females have weaker lights? Because they don't need to show off: the males will come to them. When they see a female's light - a literal green light of consent - males swarm around her, flashing wildly. When a pair are joined, they fly away to finish off in peace. Rowan Hooper



### Photographer

**Katrien Vermeire** Courtesy of Kahmann Gallery  
katrienvermeire.com