

Quick Flash Guide for the Fireflies of West Virginia

Flashing fireflies are harbingers of summer in West Virginia, with flashing typically beginning in May and lasting until August. Many night-active, flashing male fireflies can be identified to species based entirely on their unique flash pattern and color. Therefore, this guide is designed for identification based on this flash behavior!

If you see:

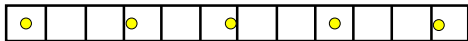
- **Yellow flashes** go to "*Photinus*" subheading, but see also "*Snappy Single Sync*," "*Heebie-Jeebies*," and "*Spring Treetop Flasher*" species
- **Green flashes** go to "*Photuris*" subheading
- **Orange flashes** go to "*Pyractomena*" subheading
- **Continuous green glowing** go to "*Phausis*" subheading

In the flash pattern depictions within this guide, each box represents 1 second (12 seconds of flash behavior for each species depicted). However, please be aware that higher temperatures will increase the speed of these flash patterns, and lower temperatures will decrease the speed of flash patterns. Fireflies will not flash below 50°F. Species length information and flash charts adapted from "*Fireflies, Glowworms, and Lightning Bugs*" by Lynn Faust. † In the chart below, ○ represents flashes, and W represents flickering flashes.

Please contact westvirginiafireflies@gmail.com if you believe you see a firefly that has an asterisk next to its name in this guide, or for any firefly related questions!

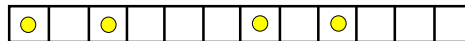
Photinus

Yellow-Bellied Firefly
Photinus scintillans



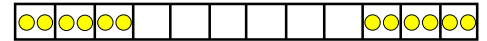
Habitat: forest trails, open fields/lawns
Time of year: June–July
Time of night: sunset
6.5–8.5 mm in length

Mr. Mac
Photinus macdermotti



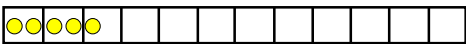
Habitat: open forests near streams
Time of year: mid-June–early July
Time of night: sunset
10 mm in length

Synchronous Firefly
Photinus carolinus



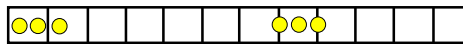
Habitat: small forest clearings near streams
Time of year: mid-June–mid-July
Time of night: ~10:30PM to ~12AM
11–15 mm in length

Cattail Flash-Train Firefly
Photinus consimilis



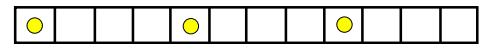
Habitat: wetlands, riverbanks
Time of year: June–mid-July
Time of night: after dark, lasting ~1 hour
10–11 mm in length

Murky Flash-Train
Photinus obscurellus



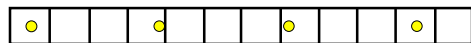
Habitat: open wetland areas
Time of year: late May–early June
Time of night: dusk, lasting 1–2 hours
9–11 mm in length

Little Gray
Photinus marginellus



Habitat: forests, margin areas
Time of year: late June–July
Time of night: sunset–dark
6–9 mm in length

Creekside Tree Blinker
Photinus sabulosus



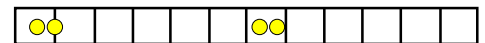
Habitat: in trees near openings
Time of year: June–July
Time of night: late dusk, lasting ~45 mins
6–8 mm in length

Common Eastern Firefly
Photinus pyralis



Habitat: widespread
Time of year: mid-June–August
Time of night: sunset–midnight
9–19 mm in length

Double Cousin*
Photinus consanguineus



Habitat: shrubland, forest
Time of year: late June
Time of night: dusk
7.5–11 mm in length ††

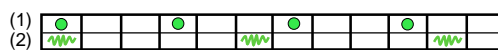
Photuris

Spring 4-Flasher *Photuris quadrifulgens*



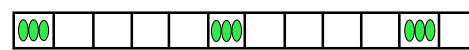
Habitat: open areas bordered by trees
Time of year: late May–early June
Time of night: ~1–2 hours after sunset
12–20 mm in length
More likely to see pattern 1.

Christmas Lights *Photuris tremulans*



Habitat: woodland openings, fencerows
Time of year: early June–mid-June
Time of night: after dark–midnight
10–12.5 mm in length
Could see either pattern 1 or 2.

Variable Triple Flash *Photuris versicolor*



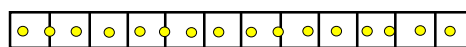
Habitat: widespread
Time of year: mid-June–early July
Time of night: dusk and into the night
13–18 mm in length

Slow Glows *Photuris "slow glows"*



Habitat: tree margins near water, fields
Time of year: early June–early July
Time of night: late dusk–midnight
11–17 mm in length

Snappy Single Sync* *Photuris frontalis*



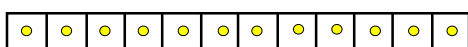
Habitat: forested wetlands & bottomland
Time of year: late June
Time of night: late dusk, lasting 1–2 hours
11–17 mm in length

Potomac Firefly* *Photuris potomaca*



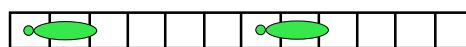
Habitat: early succession along Potomac
Time of year: ~early June–early July^{†††}
Time of night: dusk and into the night
Variable length

Heebie-Jeebies *Photuris hebes*



Habitat: tree margins near water, fields
Time of year: late June
Time of night: dusk, lasting 1–2 hours
10–12 mm in length

Dot Dashers* *Photuris pennsylvanica*-like species



Habitat: wetlands and adjacent open areas
Time of year: July
Time of night: after dark–midnight
8–11 mm in length

Pyractomena

Spring Treetop Flasher *Pyractomena borealis*



Habitat: forests, trees along open areas
Time of year: late April–May
Time of night: dusk
14–22 mm in length

Marsh Flicker *Pyractomena dispersa*



Habitat: wetland and adjacent areas
Time of year: late May–early June
Time of night: dusk–midnight
7–14 mm in length

Candle Firefly *Pyractomena angulata*



Habitat: forests, margins
Time of year: mid-June
Time of night: after dark–midnight
9–17 mm in length

Phausis

Shadow Ghost *Phausis inaccensa*



Habitat: forest
Time of year: mid-June–early July
Time of night: late dusk and into the night
Note: only females glow, stationary
4–6 mm in length

Blue Ghost* *Phausis reticulata*



Habitat: forests
Time of year: ~May–July
Time of night: just after dark, lasting ~1.5hr
6–9 mm in length

[†] Faust, L.F. 2017. Fireflies, Glowworms, and Lightning Bugs: Identification and Natural History of the Fireflies of the Eastern and Central United States and Canada. University of Georgia Press, Athens, Georgia, 30602.

^{††} Green, J.W. 1956. Revision of the Nearctic species of Photinus (Lampyridae: Coleoptera). Proceedings of the California Academy of Sciences, 28(4): 561–613.

^{†††} Lloyd, J. E. 2018. A naturalist's long walk among shadows: of North American Photuris – patterns, outlines, silhouettes... echoes. Self-published, Gainesville, FL, USA. 477 pp.