




Photo © Radim Schreiber / FireflyExperience.org



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Geographical range



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Amazing Species: Mysterious Lantern Firefly

The Mysterious Lantern Firefly (*Photuris mysticalampas*) is one of two threatened species found only in the small, densely populated eastern state of Delaware, USA.

This species’ name comes from the Latin “mystica”, meaning mystical or mysterious, and “lampas”, meaning flame or lantern. This is inspired by the males’ surreal courtship display, their prolonged greenish flashes appearing like distant torches, signalling slowly on and off through the dense forest understory. Adults emerge well after sunset from thick mossy hummocks.

This species is restricted to tidal freshwater floodplains on the Delmarva Peninsula, where it is threatened primarily by sea level rise. The rate of sea level rise here is three or four times higher than the global average, with a rise of between 0.5 and 1.5 m expected by the year 2100. This would inundate most Mysterious Lantern Firefly habitats, which are less than 1 metre above the current sea level.

Although several sites where it has been found are on protected public land, there are no specific conservation measures in place to protect the Mysterious Lantern Firefly. Ensuring forests remain alongside the floodplains where the fireflies live would be beneficial, to help mitigate the impact of rising water.