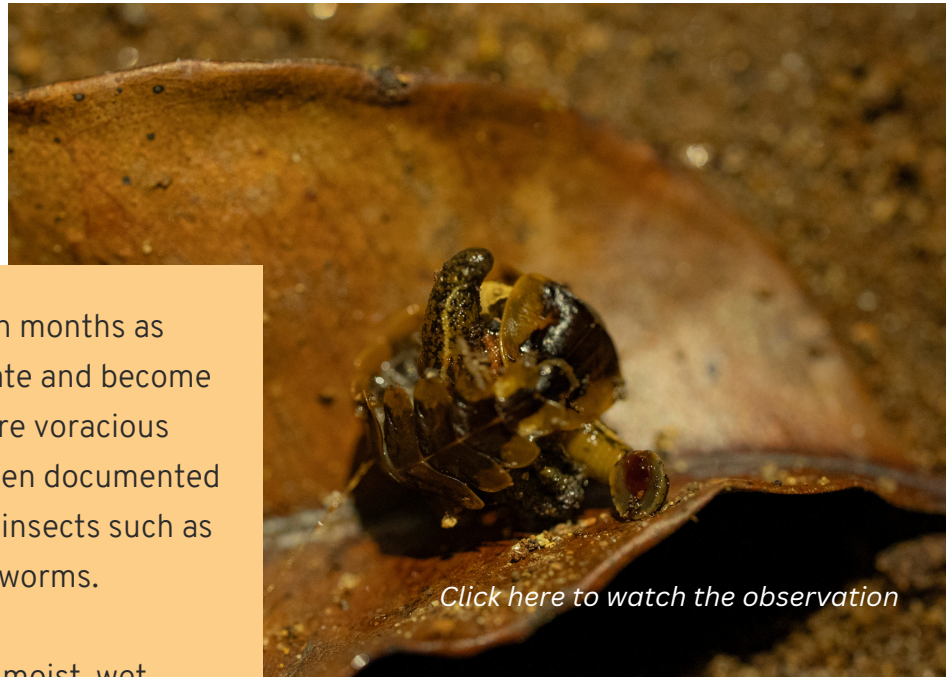


# ECOLOGICAL OBSERVATION

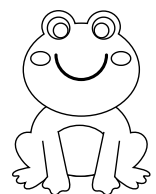
Fireflies grow up to ten months as larva before they pupate and become adults. Firefly larvae are voracious predators and have been documented to feed on soft bodied insects such as snails, slugs and earthworms.

In January 2023, on a moist, wet evening, we ventured into a shola forest in the Anamalai Tiger Reserve, looking for firefly larvae. In pitch black conditions, under a thick forest canopy, we saw a firefly larva, on the ground, glowing in a rich, lime green colour. I turned my yellowish - orange light on, focusing it away from the larva. The larva was coiled up, feeding on a leech. It was swallowing it slowly. The larvae inject their prey with paralysing neurotoxins. Then, they secrete digestive enzymes that liquefy the prey before consumption. The larva consumed the leech in thirty minutes and crawled away under leaf cover. This was an exhilarating hunt in the forest at the macro level. This is the first record of a firefly larva feeding on a leech.



*[Click here to watch the observation](#)*

## **FIREFLY LARVA PREDATION: UNEXPECTED PREY AND INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD**



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