

Blown away by a gust of wind

Of the 2,600 species of fireflies, very few synchronise their flashes. Male fireflies, perched on trees, flash in unison for hours, following rhythmic, cyclical patterns. But, on one particular night in 2022, nature broke this incredibly coordinated synchrony. That night in the Anamalai Tiger Reserve, there was frequent lightning and rain at a distance.

As I was observing the fireflies not being disturbed by the lightning, there was a loud howling sound usually associated with a gust of wind, but there was no gust. And suddenly, all the male fireflies perched on trees stopped flashing and their lights were continuously on. The trees were studded with points of yellowish-green glows. A couple of minutes later, there was a huge gust of wind that blew away all the fireflies from the trees. The forest was engulfed in yellowish-green sparks like snowflakes in a blizzard. The fireflies had their lights on as they were blown away, showing streaks of lights in this long exposure photograph.

The fireflies ended up on the ground and minutes later, there was a torrential downpour. Once it stopped raining, they went back up to the trees and continued synchronising.

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