

“A Fluorescent Frog” Transcript

Excerpt from [March 17, 2017](#) episode of Science Friday.

IRA FLATOW: This is Science Friday. I'm Ira Flatow. Joining me now is Amy Nordrum, associate editor at the IEEE Spectrum, back here in our New York studios. Welcome back, Amy.

AMY NORDRUM: Thanks, Ira.

IRA FLATOW: Finally, there's news about a fluorescent frog?

AMY NORDRUM: This is the world's first fluorescent frog, which is a bit of a tongue-twister.

IRA FLATOW: You did very well.

AMY NORDRUM: Thank you. It was found by some herpetologists at the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina. And it's called the South American Polka Dot Tree Frog. Not only does it fluoresce, but it also has red polka dots all over it.

The researchers found that this frog, unlike any other amphibian that we know of and many terrestrial animals, animals, can fluoresce. So that's different of course than bioluminescence, in which animals produce their own light, such as fireflies. Fluorescence is actually pretty rare in terrestrial animals. It's a lot more common in ocean creatures. So this was a neat discovery and a fun one for them to explore.

IRA FLATOW: But it takes ultraviolet light, black light, for it to fluoresce.

AMY NORDRUM: Yes. In order for you to be able to see it. So now they're suggesting herpetologists go around in the forest carrying UV lights so they can shine them over the frogs and see if there's more species like that.

IRA FLATOW: Does that mean a frog can see UV light? If it fluoresces in it--

AMY NORDRUM: So that is one of the topics that they're hoping to follow-up study. Can the frog actually see its own fluorescence? Or can the frog see the fluorescence of another frog of its species? And they don't know that yet. They're going to be studying the photoreceptors figure that out.

IRA FLATOW: Imagine the wild bedroom photos, posters in the frog's bedroom with UV light.

AMY NORDRUM: It's pretty neat trick.

IRA FLATOW: It is a neat trick. Thank you very much, Amy. Amy Nordrum, associate editor at the IEEE Spectrum. Thanks for being with us today.