

The Charcoal Forest

How Fire Helps Animals and Plants

**Written and illustrated
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COLORADO FIREMOTH

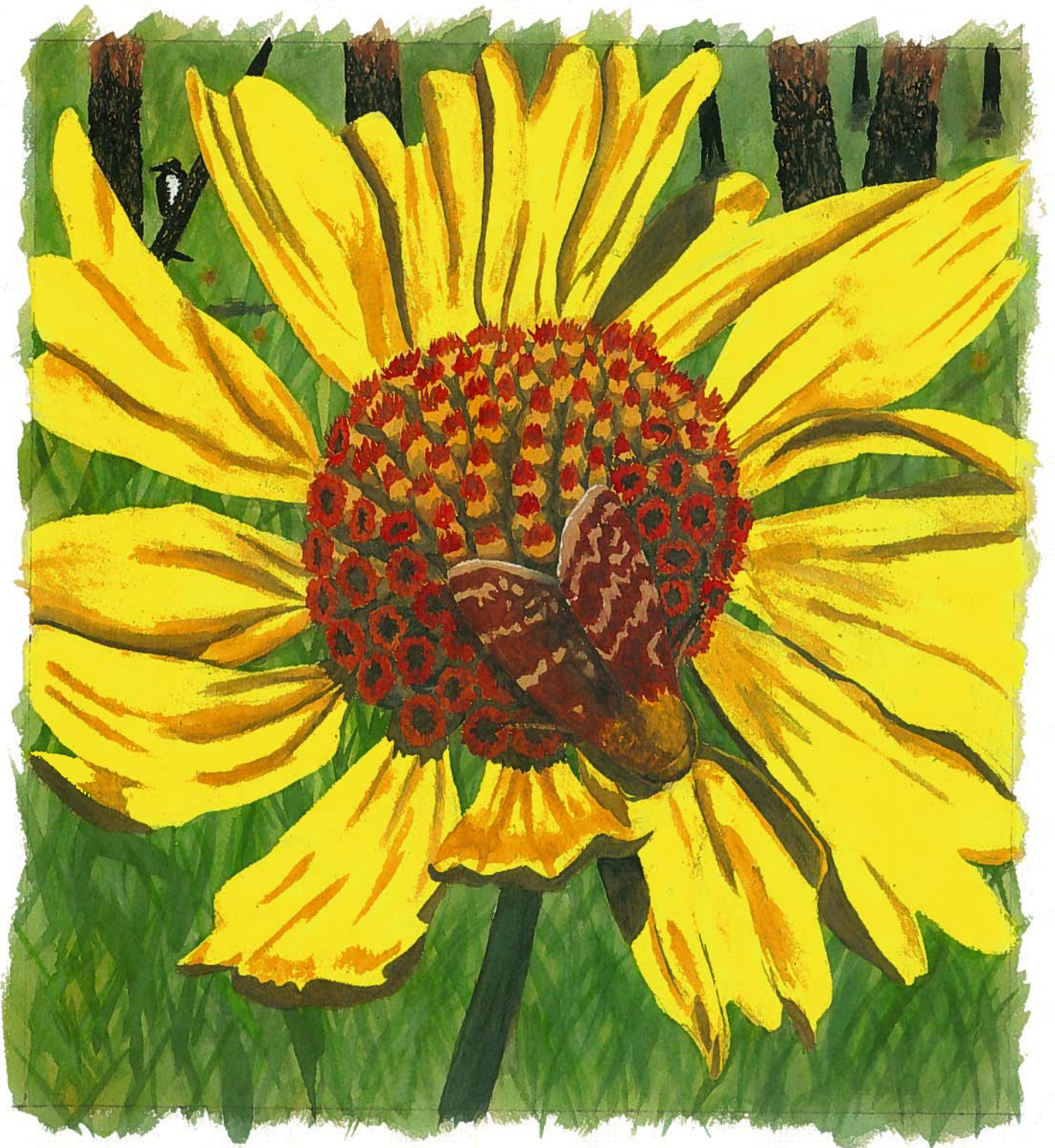


Who needs burned trees?

The Colorado firemoth does, for bright
blanketflowers to hide on as it feeds.

Would you wear bright red and yellow to hide from someone? The Colorado firemoth does! This moth spends almost its whole life on one kind of flower, the blanketflower. Blanketflowers grow best in the open spaces left by fire. When a firemoth is resting, it almost always sits so that its yellow and red parts line up with the yellow and red of the flower. This **camouflage** (CAM-uh-flahzh) helps it blend in and hide from predators. Because the moth depends on its camouflage to stay safe, it does not move very much. Unlike other moths or butterflies, it does not fly away when you come near. It's the ultimate insect couch potato!

Blanketflowers fill clearings where severe fires have killed the trees and burned the soil bare. The flowers spring up in large patches the first two years after a fire, then slowly start to disappear. By about twenty years after the fire, you won't see many blanketflowers. To find their ideal home, the firemoths have to fly in search of new burns with more flowers. They can't travel too far on their fragile wings, so they do best when there are many small burns close to each other in the charcoal forest.



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