

LAS VEGAS SUN

It's neon meets nature at new Vegas exhibit Glowing insects and fish highlight subject of bioluminescence

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Glow: Natural History Museum

Lightning bugs, glowworms and anglerfish all have one thing in common – bioluminescence – the subject of a new exhibit on display at the Las Vegas Natural History Museum, 900 North Las Vegas Blvd.

The exhibit, “Glow: Living Lights,” has been traveling around America via science exhibits and museums for five years since first opening in San Diego. The exhibit was brought to Las Vegas by the recently relocated company exhibitQ, formerly based in California. John Good, the chief executive officer for exhibitQ and newly appointed Las Vegas Natural History Museum board member said this is the second exhibit his company has provided for the museum, the first being “CSI: Crime Scene Insects.”

While the exhibit features posters about how and why certain animals use lights, there are no actual animals — unless the wall of different jarred species counts.

“Its very difficult to have a lot of live animals that are bioluminescent, things that are on land like fireflies are seasonal so they really only glow about two months during the summer so its not something we could keep in an exhibit setting,” Good said. “Then, a lot of the marine creatures are from so deep in the ocean that if you try to bring them up, they just don’t survive.”

Good said to make up for the lack of live animals, the exhibit features a lot of large pictures and video of these animals in action and thinks children will be particularly fond of the anglerfish exhibit, which is the same fish that makes a frightening appearance in the Disney film “Finding Nemo.”

“Whenever we design a science exhibit we always keep about fourth- to sixth-grader in mind because that’s the primary audience for most science museums and at about that level is good for most of us because when you’re explaining pretty complex scientific principles it’s best to keep it at a basic level,” Good said.

The exhibit's low-lighting and maze-like appearance encourages kids to break away from the pack to watch videos and absorb the interesting factoids strung throughout the space.

"Kids really like nooks and crannies, and this exhibit is full of them," Las Vegas Natural History Museum founder and executive director Marilyn Gillespie said. "They can turn a corner and there will be something new and they can discover it in the dark, in this nook, and a lot of children really like the adventure...the whole exhibit is very exciting for kids."

Gillespie said the museum brought this exhibit to Las Vegas so they could share a rare topic with the community, something special to a woman who had never encountered a lightning bug until she was 50 years old.

"It was a topic that we had never had an exhibit on ... and, as far as I know, nobody else in Las Vegas had ever done anything on this too, so just because of the educational resource that it is," Gillespie said.

The exhibit will be on display until early spring, a specific teardown date has not been determined. Admission to the museum is \$8 for adults, \$7 for seniors, \$4 for children ages 3-11 and children two and under are admitted free.