



Bioluminescence: Methods and Protocols (Methods in Molecular Biology)

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Part I I was raised in a redbrick Baltimore row house where summer was marked by the traditional honored ritual of firefly-chasing – a backyard tradition that has endured the generations. Amid the excitement, my father often told the story of how, when he was a child, researchers at the Johns Hopkins University had appealed for the systematic capture of live fireflies en masse. Science had engaged the Baltimore youth in an entrepreneurial quest to jar as many lightning bugs as the dwindling light of dusk would permit. The very next morning, each 100-count glass jar of glowing crawling insects could be exchanged at the University for exactly one crisp dollar bill. Unrecognized at the time by my father, his joyous endeavors had contributed in a profound way to the advanced molecular biological techniques that serve as the basis for this textbook. In 1947, William McElroy used extracts from those very fireflies to define the fundamental reaction underlying the mystical phenomenon of luminescence, and published “The energy source for bioluminescence in an isolated system” in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. In the decades since that summer, the study and application of bioluminescence have allowed us to leverage the enduring power of nature’s elegance. We have painstakingly harnessed a powerful tool that enables us to seek a deeper understanding of the complex mechanisms underpinning so many vital biologic systems. This second edition of Methods in Molecular Biology’s Bioluminescence: Methods and Protocols serves as a reliable and utilitarian compilation of the newest and most innovative techniques that have emerged in this rapidly expanding and progressively diverse field. We are indebted to the authors for their thoughtful contributions, inspired by their rigorous dedication to the science of bioluminescence, humbled by the unyielding support of our colleagues, and grateful for the opportunity provided us by John and Jan Walker.

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