

elfin skimmer

Nannothemis bella

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Arthropoda
Class: Insecta
Order: Odonata
Family: Libellulidae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

FEATURES

The elfin skimmer is considered an Illinois state endangered species. This species is barely large enough to be considered a “Dragon” as it is tiny with distinctive coloration. It occurs widely in sandy lakes and bogs. The males have mostly a white face with blue-grey eyes lined by a stripe of red-brown at the back edges. The body is entirely dusty white to blue-grey with black showing through. Immature males are shiny black. Females vary in color at all stages of development, ranging from black and yellow striped thorax and abdomen, narrowing towards the tail. Wings have dark streaks at the base with some orange. Female coloration is considered a possible mimicry of bees and wasps. The very young or recently molted male or female individuals can also appear lime green.

BEHAVIORS

They often linger in mating habitats, especially during cloudy weather. Wings droop while perched. Males can be quite territorial and aggressive towards other males. They perch low in shrubs and sedges around the water, with very little time out over open water. Females hang out in vegetation at the edges of upland areas. Mating is rarely observed. Males might be found guarding while females lay eggs. They alternate between tapping the water a few times and perching for a little while. They like sphagnum bogs and seepage areas at lake edges with sedges. They are found just in the northeast corner of Illinois, lining Lake Michigan. They range north into Wisconsin and Michigan surrounding the Great Lakes and northeast into New England. A small patch is found in the south across Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina.

ILLINOIS RANGE



© Mary Kay Rubey



Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none