

# great spreadwing

## *Archilestes grandis*

### FEATURES

The great spreadwing is the largest North American damselfly with a distinct pale-yellow stripe on either side and the underside of the thorax. The front of the thorax is dark brown with a full-length green stripe on either side of the midline and a half-length stripe at the edge of the brown. The sides of the thorax are yellow with a lighter brown stripe along the lower sides. The whole area develops into dusty white with maturity. Their abdomen is dark brown to metallic green above. Males have blue eyes and face. Females vary only by their blue to brown eyes and larger, rounder tip of the abdomen. The great spreadwing is easily mistaken for a dragonfly when flying over open water but is distinguishable by its slender body and wings.

### BEHAVIORS

Males perch over the water and defend their small territories, seizing females upon arrival. Eggs are laid up to 230 at a time in 15 minutes to 3 hours in leaf petioles (where the leaf connects to the stem), herbaceous and woody plants, and sometimes at great heights (44 feet highest known) above streams. All in the spreadwing Family (Lestidae) typically rest with their wings spread open, hence the name. They are known only to close their wings under certain conditions of poor weather, nightfall, threat of predators, or male harassment of females. They are found in streams, woody banks, and degraded urban areas. The larvae are sometimes seen swimming openly in pools and fishless waters.

### TAXONOMY

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

**ILLINOIS STATUS**  
common, native

### ILLINOIS RANGE



female

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male

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## **Aquatic Habitats**

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; marshes; rivers and streams

## **Woodland Habitats**

none

## **Prairie and Edge Habitats**

none