

Lyre-tipped spreadwing

Lestes unguiculatus

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

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

FEATURES

The lyre-tipped spreadwing is a medium sized (one to two inches long) damselfly with large eyes, long narrow wings, and long legs with a long tibial spur (claw) at the end of each. Both males and females have metallic brown markings on their thorax and on the top of their abdomen. Males have bright blue eyes and a light blue body, while females have brown to blue eyes on a bright yellow/white body. Distinguishing between the northern (*Lestes disjunctus*), southern (*Lestes australis*), and sweetflag spreadwing (*Lestes forcipatus*) is very difficult and requires differentiation between small differences in color patterns and abdominal structures.

BEHAVIORS

This species can be found in temporary wetlands and shallow marshes and on the edges of lakes and ponds statewide in Illinois. Eggs are laid in the fall, hatch in the spring according to light cues, and larvae live for one to two years before metamorphosing into winged adults. Adult males spend most of the time perched on the vertical stalks of plants. Females are followed into the air and mating lasts 25 minutes; usually in the afternoon, interrupted by several landings. Females deposit several hundred eggs over the course of an hour by backing down the stem of a bulrush into shallow pools of water. They can be seen in flight statewide from June to September.

ILLINOIS RANGE



female

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lyre-tipped spreadwing

male

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Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; marshes; rivers and streams; swamps;
temporary water supplies

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none