

northern spreadwing

Lestes disjunctus

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

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

FEATURES

Northern spreadwing is medium sized dragonfly (one and one-half to two inches) with a large head, a large thorax with wings that are narrow at the base and wider then rounded, and a small abdomen. The mature males change color with age, and immature females have characteristics of immature males (andromorphic). Immature males are rusty-red all over, with a yellow head, red eyes over yellow, a metallic brown thorax with thin red stripes, and a dark metallic green stripe down the top of the orangish abdomen. With maturity, males change blue, with dark blue eyes, a light blue thorax with narrow blue stripes, and an abdomen with a dark metallic green color that is light blue underneath. Mature females have a metallic dark-green thorax and abdomen that are both cream colored underneath, and eyes that are either brown or blue. Without in-hand observation the northern spreadwing is indistinguishable to the southern (*Lestes australis*) and sweetflag spreadwing (*Lestes forficatus*).

BEHAVIORS

This species haunts boggy spots, and well-vegetated ponds and lakes. They can be seen in flight mid-day from June to September in the north-east quarter of the state. Larvae mostly eat midges for the approximately ten months they spend living underwater. They molt into winged adults in the summertime when water temperatures reach the mid-60's and become sexually mature after 16-18 days. They mate in about 15 minutes in flight over water and females deposit eggs either below the water surface or on bulrushes and sedges. Illinois is the southern edge of this species range.

ILLINOIS RANGE



female

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male

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Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; marshes; swamps

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge