

## widow skimmer *Libellula luctuosa*

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Arthropoda

Class: Insecta

Order: Odonata

Family: Libellulidae

ILLINOIS STATUS: common, native

### FEATURES

The widow skimmer averages about 1.65 inches to almost 2.00 inches in length. A large, dark area is present at the base of each wing. The male and female have different coloration. The eyes, head and thorax are dark brown in the male. His thorax has a white, powdery appearance in the front, and his abdomen has a powdery white look over a pale blue coloration. The female has brown eyes on a light brown face. Her thorax has tan spots on the sides. The thorax is basically brown. Her abdomen has a dorsal black stripe that is surrounded by yellow stripes. Her wing bases are dark but not as dark as those of the male. The tip of her wings has a dark mark. There is no white coloration in the female's wings.

### BEHAVIORS

Both male and female widow skimmers are often seen far from water in grasslands and along roads. At water, they fly from a few inches to about six feet above the water's surface. Males defend a territory from other dragonflies of their own and other species. They may have a group territory where the dominant male is most likely to mate. Mating occurs quickly, usually in flight. Females lay eggs by flicking them on open water or releasing them below the abdomen and then tapping open water with the tip of the abdomen causing them to drop into water. Adults may live about 43 days after reaching maturity. Adults catch insects in flight. Nymphs eat insects and a variety of other small animals. This species is typically active from May through October.

### HABITATS

#### Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; marshes; peatlands; rivers and streams; swamps; lakes, ponds and reservoirs

#### Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; southern Illinois lowlands

#### Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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