

black saddlebags

Tramea lacerata

FEATURES

Black Saddlebags are widespread with blackbroad saddle saddlebags, or conspicuous dark markings at the base of their broad hindwings that resemble “saddlebags.” Males have dark brown eyes with a dark purple face, a dark brown to black thorax occasionally scattered with metallic black markings, and a black abdomen. Yellow squares are found on the seventh abdominal segment indicating immaturity. Females are duller, with pale markings on the seventh abdominal segment. Immature individuals are dark brown with yellow markings along most segments of the abdomen.

BEHAVIORS

Males glide and cruise erratically along shorelines over open water at waist height. Mating is brief in flight or longer when perched, followed by rapid tandem flight low over the water with moments of hovering until egg laying. The pair drops to the water, the male releases the female for one tap, then they rejoin and repeat carefully, as they are stalked by bass or other fish in the waters below. Both males and females roost high in treetops, in dead twigs. This species is migratory, appearing north in the summer for breeding. The offspring migrate South with large-scale migration during the fall on the Atlantic Coast. They like shallow ponds and open lakes with aquatic vegetation and wander far from the water. They are found throughout all of Illinois. Populations are widespread, east to the Atlantic Coast, south to the Gulf Coast, west to the Pacific Coast, and south into Mexico. They are only absent in the Rockies.

TAXONOMY

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Arthropoda

Class: Insecta

Order: Odonata

Family: Libellulidae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

ILLINOIS RANGE - Adults



Migrating



Summer

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female

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male

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Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none