

elegant spreadwing

Lestes inaequalis

FEATURES

The elegant spreadwing presents as impressively large, and mostly metallic green uppermost side at maturity. Southern specimens are distinctly larger. The male typically has strongly bicolored eyes of dark blue-green, exhibiting a vibrant blue highlight on pale blue/green. The male thorax appears metallic green to bronze, possibly marked with a reddish midline followed by pale yellow sides and undersides, occasionally becoming dusty white. Female eyes are also strongly bicolored, but dark green on dull yellow or light green. Female body coloring is much the same as male except for narrow, pale red-brown stripes on her back (running vertically from the head to the wings). Oldest female individuals may become dusty white on the underside of the thorax and tip of the abdomen.

BEHAVIORS

Males often perch in shrubs, under plant leaves and stems, hidden in the shade. More active later in the day, they noticeably fly out over the open water of lakes and ponds. Females lay eggs on the surface of water lily leaves. They feed in weed clearings among herbaceous vegetation (plants without woody stems). 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 lakes, ponds, and slow streams with large amounts of vegetation like water lilies and sedges. They are barely found in Illinois and are generally found at the southern tip and the northern one-eighth of the state. They are found more heavily outside of Illinois in the surrounding states of Missouri, Kentucky, and Wisconsin.

TAXONOMY

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

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

ILLINOIS RANGE



female

© Joyce Gibbons



male

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Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none