

lilypad forktail

Ischnura kellicotti

FEATURES

The lilypad forktail is a small (about one inch long) damselfly with a specialized life history. Adult females change color with age (heteromorphic), a rare trait among odonates; the pale blue patterns on their black bodies turn orange with age. Males are black with bright blue patterning and have forked projections at the end of their abdomen (“tail”). The wings of both sexes turn in color from amber to clear with age and their eyes of both sexes are dark on top and blue on the bottom in males, and green in females. The identifying feature of this species are the large blue spots behind the eyes on the top of the head. The skimming bluet (*Enallagma geminatum*) is a look-alike which occurs statewide and lacks the blue spots behind the eyes. Females may be confused for eastern forktail (*Ischnura verticalis*), which are rarely seen around lily pads and lack an orange spot on the top of the end of the “tail”.

BEHAVIORS

The life history of the lilypad forktail is inseparable from the plants of their namesake and are seen almost exclusively on ponds and lakes containing *Nuphar* and *Nymphaea* species. Mating lasts about 20 minutes and is rarely seen. Females deposit their larvae on the undersides of water lilies. Winged adults are sedentary and spend lots of time on lily pads with their tails curled down (maybe a predator detection mechanism?). Between June and July, they can be seen flying very short distances in the counties surrounding Lake Michigan.

TAXONOMY

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

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

ILLINOIS RANGE



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Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none