

shadow darner *Aeshna umbrosa*

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Arthropoda

Class: Insecta

Order: Odonata

Family: Aeshnidae

Illinois Status: common, native

Features

Stripes without jagged sides are present on the thorax. Some of the stripes are bent at the upper end and show a flaglike projection. Males have turquoise-colored eyes, and the stripes on the sides of their thorax are blue-green at the top transitioning to yellow-green at the bottom. The male's abdominal spots are very small and either green or blue. Females have one of two forms: one has brown eyes with yellow to green marks on the body in the same pattern as the male; the other form has blue-colored eyes, green to yellow stripes on the thorax and blue spots on the abdomen. The cerci (pair of upper appendages at the tip of the abdomen in males; only appendages at the tip of the abdomen in females) are rounded at the tip. Adults of this species are about two and one-half to nearly three inches in total body length.

Behaviors

Adults are active from June through October usually in the afternoon and evening. Males fly low to the water when searching for females and spend a lot of time hovering while aimed at the shoreline. Females lay eggs on logs or sticks in water, on moist tree trunks or even on soil. Adults feed in clearings and at woodland edges and are most active in shaded areas. They catch insects in flight and may eat their prey in flight. Nymphs eat insects and a variety of other small animals.

Illinois Range: statewide

Aquatic Habitats: bottomland forests; marshes; peatlands; rivers and streams; lakes, ponds and reservoirs

Woodland Habitats: bottomland forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats: none

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