

sweetflag spreadwing

Lestes forcipatus

FEATURES

The sweetflag spreadwing is a damselfly that is about one and a half inches long and looks very similar to other spreadwings (*Lestes sp.*). The eyes are bright blue on top and pale below. On the male, the thorax is mostly black with narrow, pale blue stripes on the sides, and is cream colored below. The thorax of the female has black and pale blue stripes that are near equal in width. The color of the abdomen is the same on males and females, black on top and blue on the sides and below. This species is very easily mistaken for other spreadwings species, and because color patterns can vary, inspection of the male's claspers and female's ovipositor (which tends to be very large in this species) is needed to distinguish it from other species.

BEHAVIORS

The sweetflag spreadwing occupies small ponds, lakes, and wetlands with emergent vegetation such as cattail, bullrush, and sweetflag (of course!). It can be seen flying from June to July, in the eastern third of the state and along the Mississippi River from Dubuque to Keokuk. Mating is mostly done in the afternoon, and pairs deposit their eggs near the water surface on aquatic plants. They are most frequently seen mating or perched near the water's edge.

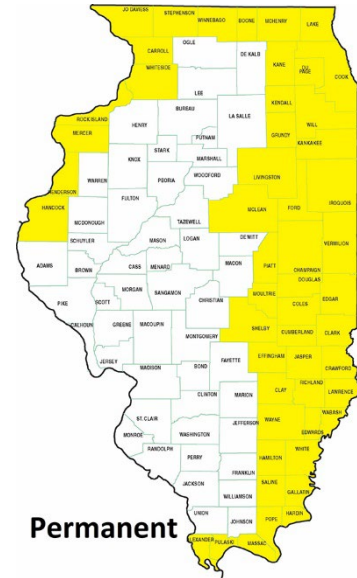
TAXONOMY

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

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

ILLINOIS RANGE



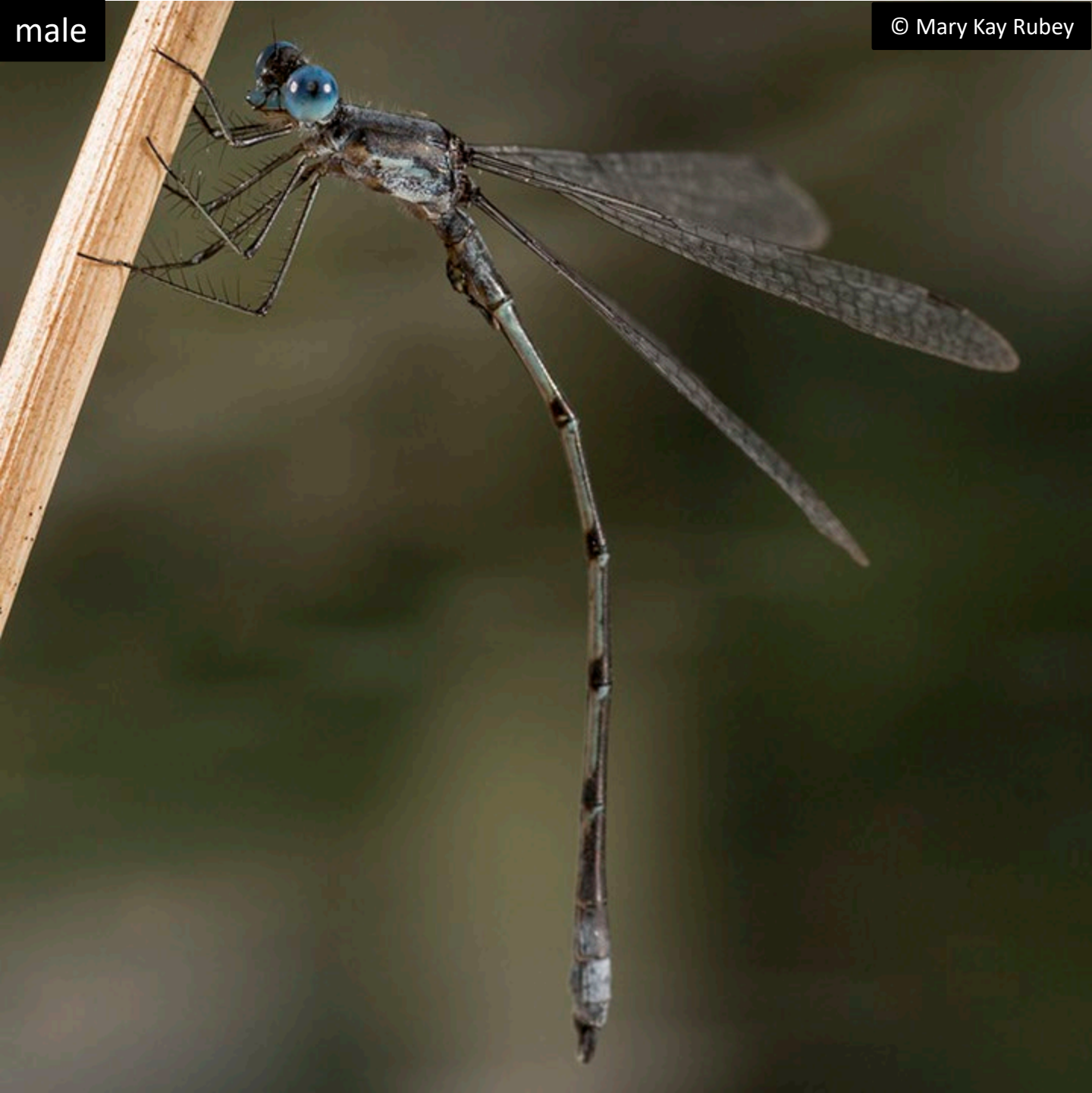
female

© Mary Kay Rubey



male

© Mary Kay Rubey



Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; marshes; rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none