

Scarlet bluet

Enallagma pictum

Family - Coenagrionidae

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Scarlet Bluet (male)

State Status:

Special Concern

Federal Status:

State Rank:

S2

New England Rank:

Global Rank:

G3

Threats:

The degradation and destruction (from development, water-level drawdown, and run-off from roads) of wetlands that provide breeding and nymph habitat is the most significant threat to the scarlet bluet. Off road vehicle use along pond shores can destroy habitat as well. The loss of nearby upland habitats for maturing adults is also a threat to this species.

Management Recommendations:

Conservation Considerations:

The protection of aquatic bed and emergent vegetation along pond shorelines is critical for this species. Improper siting of docks and aquatic vegetation removal threaten this species habitat.

Habitat

Scarlet bluets are found in acidic, sandy ponds with floating vegetation, often with water lilies. Nymphs are aquatic and live among the aquatic vegetation while adults spend much of their time flying over the water or in nearby uplands.

Range:

The scarlet bluet's range extends from southern Maine to New Jersey.

State Distribution:

Occurs from Oxford County east to Kennebec County and south along the coast.

Global Distribution:

G3

General Description:

Damselflies have large eyes on the sides of the head, short antennae, and four heavily veined wings that are folded together over the back. The scarlet bluet is a small semi-aquatic damselfly with a black head, red eyes and a small red spot behind each eye. It has a long, slender abdomen, with ten segments that are orange below and black above. The male's thorax (winged and legged section behind the head) is red with black stripes on top. Females are similar, but have a duller yellow thorax and thicker abdomens. Scarlet bluets are just over an inch in size.

Phenology:

Scarlet bluets have a one-year life cycle. Females deposit eggs (ovipositing) on the underside of aquatic vegetation, using the ovipositor located on the underside of her abdomen to slice into the vegetation and deposit eggs. Most often the male remains attached to the back of the female, guarding his mate to prevent other males from mating with her before she completes egg laying. Eggs are laid in late summer and probably hatch in fall. The nymphs develop over the winter and spring, undergoing several molts. In early to mid-summer they crawl up on emergent vegetation and begin their transformation into adults and fly off to upland areas where they spend several days or more feeding and maturing. Adults feed on a wide variety of smaller insects which they typically catch in flight. When mature, the males return to the wetlands where they spend most of their time searching for females. The male scarlet bluet grasps the female behind the head with the

terminal appendage at the end of his abdomen. If the female is receptive, she allows the male to grasp her, then curls the end of her abdomen up to the base of his where his secondary sexual organs (hamules) are located. The coupling results in the heart-shaped tandem formation characteristic of all odonates.