



**60**  
Lilypad Forktail  
male, orange  
female—Evans  
Co., GA, May 2006;  
blue female—  
Atlantic Co., NJ,  
June 2008



tion. Then there is typical **Lilypad Forktail** behavior; **Eastern** rarely rests on lily pads (but may do so). Note possibility of confusing orange females with male **Cherry** or **Scarlet Bluets**, which have much less orange on abdomen tip.

**Natural History** Both sexes common in breeding habitat; almost invariably perch flat on lily pads, with abdomen curled down near end to touch leaf (for support? predator detection?). Flight rapid and low between perches, streaking rather than fluttering; perhaps better flight for coping with wind or avoiding predation. Both orange and blue females mate, but mating seldom seen, so perhaps female mates only once. Copulation lasts about 20 min. Larvae live under water-lily leaves. Few odonates so closely tied to a single type of plant.

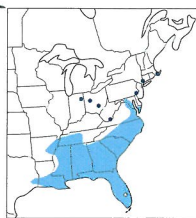
**Habitat** Ponds and lakes with extensive beds of water lilies of any species, including water shield.

**Flight Season** ON Jul–Sep, ME Jun–Aug, OH Jun–Jul, NJ May–Sep, LA Mar–Sep, GA Mar–Nov, FL Feb–Dec.

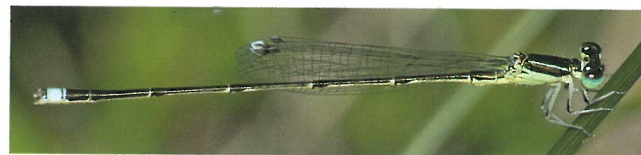
#### 61 Furtive Forktail *Ischnura prognata*

TL 30–37, HW 14–20

**Description** Long, slender forktail of southern swamps. *Male*: Eyes green, tiny postocular spots blue, thorax green with black stripes, abdomen black above, yellowish on sides; S<sub>9</sub> blue. *Female*: Immature with eyes dull orange; face, postocular spots, thorax except thin black midline, and S<sub>1</sub>–3 bright orange; rest of abdomen black above. With maturity, eyes green, head and front of thorax dull metallic brownish, sides of thorax pale, whitish to greenish or bluish. Often a small dark triangle on sides of thorax at wing base just behind dark median stripe. Abdomen black above with varying amounts of gray pruinosity.



**61**  
Furtive Forktail  
male—Floyd Co.,  
GA, May 2006;  
immature  
female—Glynn  
Co., GA, April  
2008, Giff Beaton;  
female—  
Chattooga Co.,  
GA, May 2005,  
Marion M. Dobbs



**Identification** Only forktail so long and slender. If size and shape not sufficient, presence of blue only on S<sub>9</sub> is a good mark for males (**Rambur's** has blue on S<sub>8</sub> also). Mature females distinguished from other dark species with at least some abdominal pruinosity (**Citrine**, **Eastern**, **Fragile**) by often pale bluish or greenish sides (others are usually gray to white), stigmas graded from dark proximally to light distally (others all dark). Dull-colored mature female **Rambur's** also looks like **Furtive** but less elongate, rarely if ever overlap in habitat. **Rambur's** typically has pale postocular spots; **Furtive** lacks them. Immature females colored much like immature female **Citrine** but much larger; also **Citrine** shows much more orange on abdomen, S<sub>1</sub>–5 and S<sub>9</sub>–10. Immature female **Rambur's** has less orange, usually only on S<sub>1</sub>–2 (S<sub>1</sub>–3 in **Furtive**). Long, slender **Attenuated** and **Pale Bluets** of same habitat show much more blue in both sexes. In far southern Florida, see **Lucifer Swampdamselfly**.

**Natural History** Both sexes, mature and immature, usually present together in preferred habitat; apparently do not wander away from water; and never move into open habitats. Move slowly through dense beds of vegetation in flight, even up into lower tree branches; long abdomen probably adaptation to hovering. Females oviposit alone.

**Habitat** Swamps and swampy borders of slow streams, always under canopy. Usually associated with dense growth of herbaceous plants such as tall grasses, water smartweed, and lizard's tail.

**Flight Season** OH Apr–May, LA Feb–Sep, GA Feb–Dec, FL all year.

#### 62 Rambur's Forktail *Ischnura ramburii*

TL 27–36, HW 15–19

**Description** Large, brightly marked southern and coastal forktail. *Male*: Eyes green with black cap, tiny postocular spots blue. Thorax green with wide median and humeral stripes; antehumeral stripe narrow, rarely broken. Abdomen shiny black above, golden on sides; S<sub>8</sub> blue, S<sub>9</sub>–10 black above, blue on sides. Populations at far western edge of U.S. range and farther south in tropics with all of S<sub>9</sub> blue also. *Female*: Polymorphic. Heteromorph with postocular spots, thorax, and S<sub>1</sub>–2 bright orange with black midline, abdomen





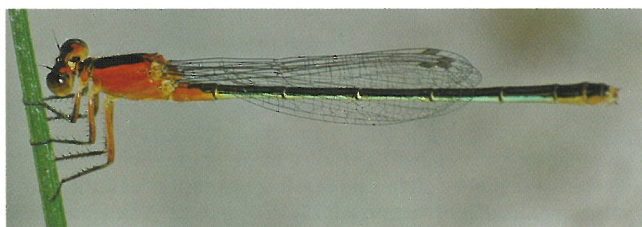
62.1

Rambur's Forktail  
male—Suwannee  
Co., FL, April 2008;  
andromorph  
female—Monroe  
Co., FL, December  
2007



62.2

Rambur's Forktail  
immature  
heteromorph  
female—Clay Co.,  
FL, June 2004;  
heteromorph  
female—Dade  
Co., FL, January  
2006, Giff Beaton



otherwise entirely black above, pale greenish on sides of S3–7 and orange on sides of S8–10. Thorax becoming duller and eventually orangey-brown to greenish-brown with maturity, with faint paler antehumeral stripe; sides of abdomen pale tan throughout. At least some females with conspicuous blue-green postocular spots, may be lost with further maturation. Andromorph colored just like male, also varying geographically, with blue thorax when immature.

**Identification** Males and andromorph females easily distinguished from all other damselflies in range by large size (for a forktail) and blue S8 and sides of S9. Other forktails in range with green, striped thorax and blue abdomen tip are smaller and have S8–9 blue, S8 with black stripe on side (**Eastern**), or longer and more slender with S9 blue (**Furtive**). **Lilypad Forktail** and several bluets superficially similar, but all with blue thorax. Immature andromorph female **Rambur's** also with blue thorax, but no others with abdomen tip similarly colored. See also female **Furtive Forktail**.

**Natural History** Both sexes at or near water most of time. Where common, large sleeping aggregations have been found at waterside. Males and sometimes mating pairs can be

very common in preferred habitats, often more out in open than other forktails, at edge of vegetation beds. Both female morphs commonly seen in pairs, orange immatures less commonly. Copulation very lengthy, averaging 200 min and up to almost 7 hr, majority occurring in afternoon. Females of copulating pairs typically grab substrate, unlike most pond damsels but apparently characteristic of at least some forktails. Abdomen has to be very flexible to do this. Oviposition solo, mostly in late afternoon, in floating leaves, stems, and debris, sometimes with tip of abdomen submerged. May spend minutes perched in one spot moving only tip of abdomen to deposit eggs. Regular predator, females especially, on other small damselflies (including their own species); mostly tenerals but some older.

**Habitat** Occurs in great variety of habitats in lowland range—lakes, ponds, marshes, ditches, even brackish waters, as long as some shore vegetation such as grasses and sedges present. Especially common near coast and but not known to breed in full salt water.

**Flight Season** ME Jul–Sep, NJ May–Oct, KY Jun–Jul, LA all year, GA Feb–Dec, FL all year.

**Distribution** Across Southwest to southeastern California and south to Venezuela and throughout West Indies.

63 Eastern Forktail *Ischnura verticalis*

TL 20–33, HW 11–19

**Description** Typical small forktail with black-striped green thorax and blue abdomen tip. *Male*: Eyes and face bright green, postocular spots bluish. Thorax bright green, with black median and humeral stripes. Rarely antehumeral stripe constricted as in Fragile Forktail. Abdomen black except S1 and sides of S2 green, S8–9 blue, each with short but thick black stripe low on sides. Achieves mature color in 1 day. *Female*: Polymorphic. Heteromorph when young with orange postocular spots, thorax, and abdomen base. Thorax with wide black median and narrow black humeral stripes. Abdomen orange on S1–2 and much of S3, remainder shiny black above.



63.1

Eastern Forktail  
male, immature  
heteromorph  
female—Jackson  
Co., WI, June 2007;  
female—Wayne  
Co., OH, July 2007

