

Emerald family – *Corduliidae*

First Glance:

Large to small size, mostly dark, very thin abdomens (except for Common Baskettails which have skimmer-like bodies). Almost constant and acrobatic flight, rarely perches, often found high over fields. Wings clear (except for Prince Baskettails), males have brilliant green eyes.

ID tips:

Flight – either high (often canopy height), or very low just above water's surface; fast, acrobatic, accomplished fliers.

Hunting – mostly aerial, some gleaning (picking perched insects from vegetation).

Perching – rarely (except for Mocha Emeralds): when this family perches or hangs it's usually at an angle from stream-side vegetation.

Body Type – males have glowing, almost luminescent eyes that touch, and very thin abdomens.

Wings – narrow and unpatterned (except for Prince Baskettails which have slight and variable dark markings). Sundragons, Common Baskettails and Shadowdragons have small amounts of basal wing patterns that are difficult to see in flight.

Oviposting – baskettails drop or fling eggs over water's surface, often in clusters. Other emeralds hover and tap shallow water or mud with their abdomen tip, leaving it brown and mud-covered.

General Info:

Species in N. VA – 9 (7 on website)

Size Range – 1.6-3.2"

N. VA Flight Period – April-October (Fine-lined Emeralds may fly into early November)

Habitat Types – flowing water, from tiny seeps to shallow rivers, except for the adaptable Common and Prince Baskettails which can also be found at ponds, marshes and swamps.

Notes:

- Possibly the most acrobatic fliers, emeralds will fly for hours without landing, often performing dizzying, erratic loops, zig-zags and figure-eights. They're often seen in feeding swarms over ball fields on summer evenings.
- The eyes of the male Clamp-tipped, Mocha and Fine-lined Emeralds, along with the male Prince Baskettail, are such a brilliant, iridescent green that you may see the color even as they fly by at break-neck speed.
- Prince Baskettails patrol our largest rivers and lakes, while Clamp-tipped Emeralds prefer tiny, barely visible forest seeps.
- The Fine-lined Emerald is one of Northern VA's least common dragonflies, considered scarce throughout its range. Much of its natural history is unknown.



Mocha Emerald



Mocha Emerald

Emeralds:

Prince Baskettail



Common Baskettail



Prince Baskettail

Common Baskettail

