Petaltail family - *Petaluridae*

**First Glance:**

*Large, black-gray coloring, long thin body with dark separated eyes and clear wings.*  
*Perches frequently on tree trunks, and sometimes on people.*

**ID tips:**

- **Flight** – relatively weak flight, usually up and around tree trunks.  
- **Hunting** – mostly gleaning  
- **Perching** – frequently on sunny tree trunks, logs and branches.  
- **Body Type** – smallish head with separated eyes and long, thin abdomen.  
- **Wings** – long, thin and unpatterned  
- **Oviposting** – insert/inject eggs directly into mud, sand and leaves of forest seeps.

**General Info:**

- **Species in N. VA** – 1 (on website)  
- **Size Range** – 3”  
- **N. VA Flight Period** – June-July (possibly late May to early August)  
- **Habitat Types** – tiny, flowing forest seeps with nearby sunny clearings.

**Notes:**

- This family has only two species - one, the Gray Petaltail lives here in the east. The Black Petaltail lives out west and shares the same specialized habitat needs.
- This is the most primitive dragonfly in the U.S. – its relatives flew alongside dinosaurs during the Jurassic period.
- Although often skittish when patrolling its tiny forest seeps, it’s quite tame when perched. If you stand still in the sun nearby, there’s a good chance it will land on you (see photo on next page).
- Unlike other dragonfly species, petaltail larvae appear to spend some time out of the water, living under moist leaves around their seeps, like earthworms and salamanders.
Petaltail: