

Black-shouldered Spinyleg



Black-shouldered Spinyleg (*Dromogomphus spinosus*) – 2.5", 53-68 mm

Flight Record:
(6/03-9/12)
Peaks
July-August

*Fairly
Common*

Habitat:
Rocky,
shallow
rivers &
streams

**First
Glance:**
Medium,
thin. Black
w/ pale
marks.
Black
shoulder
stripe
visible from
a distance.
Perches
often, near
water on
rocks, paths
and in trees

Compare:
Clubtails:
Cobra,
Midland,
Splendid

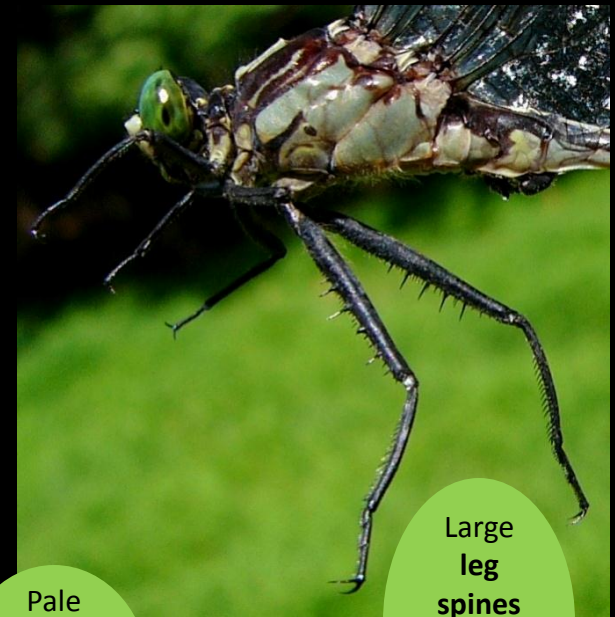
M



Pale green
to yellow
markings
on top of
every
abdominal
segment



Pale
face
with
**thin
stripes**



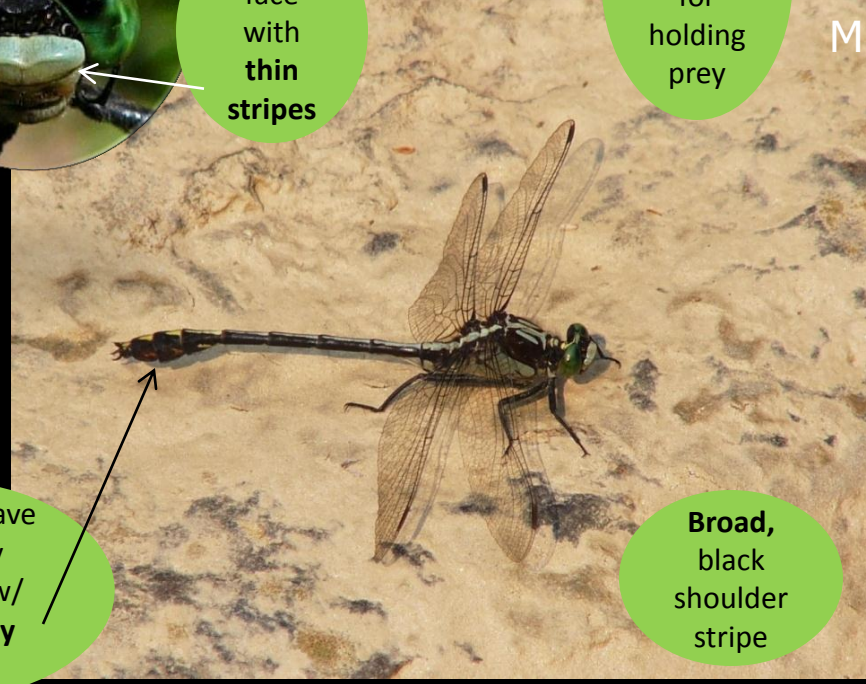
Large
**leg
spines**
for
holding
prey

M

F



Both sexes have
a relatively
small club, w/
slightly **rusty**
side-spots



Broad,
black
shoulder
stripe

Notes from the field – Black-shouldered Spinyleg:

One of Northern Virginia's more common stream and river dragonflies, you're still unlikely to find this species in most suburban streams. I've lived in Reston 30 years and only seen three there. Rather, it prefers our somewhat larger, and less developed stream systems, such as Bull Run, Popes Head and Cub Run. You can also go to any of our river parks with shallow, rocky sections (Riverbend, Bles Park, Elizabeth Mills), and you're likely to see at least a few.

Field marks and behavior combine to make ID relatively easy. As the name implies, they do indeed have a broad, black stripe on their "shoulder". Most importantly, they have light marks on top of *every* abdominal segment – this separates them from several very similar clubtails. Lastly, they often perch low for long periods on rocks, pathways, docks, and logs – most other clubtails their size are either more skittish, or spend more time in trees. Look for them on sunny, summer afternoons perched on exposed rocks in large, shallow streams and rocky rivers.

I spent several weeks along Bull Run one summer searching for the rare Laura's and Splendid Clubtails, but *every* clubtail I chased down or stalked turned out to be the more common spinyleg. I actually climbed a small tree to net a clubtail off its leafy perch, only to find *another* spinyleg! But this one was *brilliant* yellow and adorned with especially impressive leg spines (lower photo) – common maybe, but never ordinary.



The closer I got, the higher he raised his abdomen – his way of saying, "MY rock!"



Bright yellow juveniles turn pale olive with age.