

# Common Sanddragon





# Common Sanddragon (*Progomphus obscurus*) – 2.1", 47-53 mm

Habitat Conservation Alert!

## Flight

### Record:

(5/29-8/06)

Peaks mid  
June-July.

*Rare*

### Habitat:

Shallow,  
sunny creeks  
& streams  
with sandy/  
gravelly  
banks.

### First

#### Glance:

Medium.

Dark w/  
yellow marks  
& bright tip  
(cerci).

Long, fast,  
low, frequent  
patrols over  
water, almost  
touching the  
surface.

Perches low  
on banks &  
rocks/logs.

### Compare:

Unicorn  
Clubtail



Dark  
spot at  
each  
wing-  
base.

M

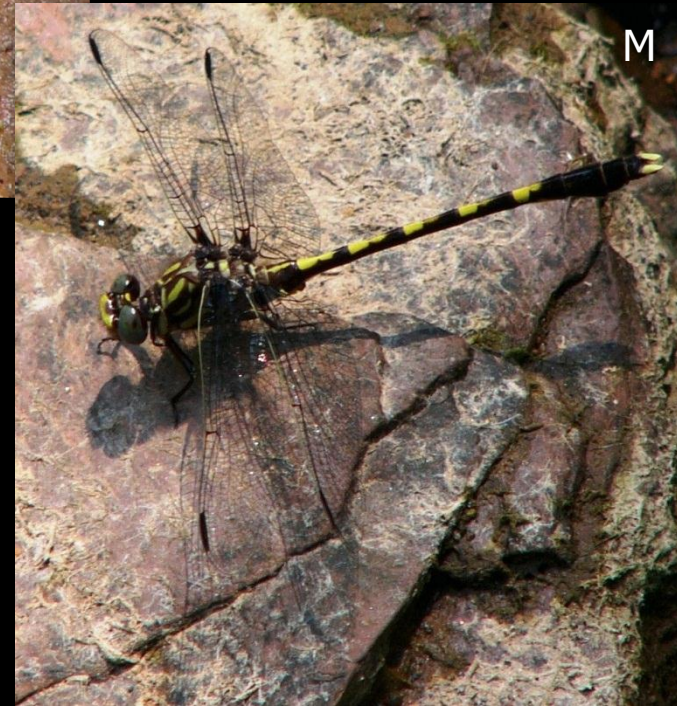
Small, dark  
club, **bright  
yellow-white  
cerci** at  
abdomen tip,  
and  
bright yellow  
abdomen  
blotches.

Olive  
green to  
brownish  
eyes



Bright cerci  
= great  
field-mark

M



M



## Notes from the field – Common Sanddragon:

Despite its name, this species is rare in Northern VA. In other parts of the country, where clean, sunny, shallow creeks with plenty of sandy/gravelly banks are common, so too are Common Sanddragons. Our urban waterways are too influenced by stormwater, flowing fast and unchecked off impervious surfaces (roads, parking lots, roofs, etc.). This creates deeply incised, eroded banks and streambeds, with excess silt, unstable flows and very few scenes like the one below, taken at Bull Run. Goose Creek is the only other place I've seen Sanddragons in our area, but I imagine careful exploration of Pope's Head and Cub Run might also uncover a few of these elusive insects.



Look for a dragonfly zipping along low, just above the water's surface, looping back on relatively short patrols and perching often on rocks and gravel bars. They usually hold their abdomens tilted up, like most male clubtails displaying on territory. Those bright yellow cerci at the abdomen tip are *great* fieldmarks. When they're perched on a favorite rock (they often come back, again and again to the same rock), they can be relatively easy to approach. The photographs on these pages were taken with a minimal amount of zoom – I was only ever a few feet away.



These brightly colored, highly active indicators of clean, stable stream systems are quite gussy and territorial, more than willing to stand their ground against a six-foot intruder who dares to approach THEIR rock ☺