

Eastern Ringtail



Eastern Ringtail (*Erpetogomphus designatus*) – 2.0", 49-55 mm

Habitat Conservation Alert!

Flight Record:
(6/09-9/20)
Peaks
July-August

Uncommon

Habitat:
Clean,
shallow
sections of
rivers

First Glance:
Small, thin.
Mustard & bright green
coloring,
with bright
ring-like
markings.
Weak flight.
Perches
often on low
vegetation
along
meadow and
forest edges.

Compare:
female
Meadowhawk
& female
Eastern
Pondhawk

Juv M



Blue eyes,
green
thorax,
amber
smudge at
wing base,
and bright
mustard
club.

Juv M



Our only clubtail
with a
raised, domed
bump on the
occiput
(tiny area
between top of
the eyes).

Female has
smaller club,
but shares
other marks.



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Notes from the field – Eastern Ringtail:

This small, somewhat fragile-looking clubtail can be difficult to find on the water. However, careful examination of tall grass meadows near cleaner sections of the Potomac River in late summer, will often result in sightings of several ringtails. They appear to prefer perching *in* the grass, rather than on the tips of stems like many dragonflies. Look for mustard yellow and light green, with flashes of black and white rings. Skittish and slight, they may seem to vanish when disturbed, but often return shortly to the very same patch of grass.

The stretch of river that runs from Riverbend Park to Algonkian Regional Park appears to provide just what they need and acts as a population center for ringtails in our area. Bles Park, in Sterling, may be the best site in Northern VA to get a great look at this unusually colored little clubtail.

The first time I saw this dragonfly, I was exploring a meadow along the Potomac with my dragonfly buddy, Tony. It was our first year looking in habitats beyond suburban ponds, and every other species was new. When we first saw that flash of mustard yellow, we thought, “immature meadowhawk?”. Then we saw grassy green, bright bands of black and white, and



powder blue eyes – what was this thing?! It took 20 mins searching thru field guides to answer our question – Eastern Ringtail!