

Russet-tipped Clubtail



Russet-tipped Clubtail (*Stylurus plagiatus*) – 2.5", 57-66 mm

Flight

Record:

(7/07-10/03)

Seen most
Aug-Sept.

*Uncommon
to Fairly
Common*

Habitat:

Shallow
rivers and
large, wide
creeks

First

Glance:

Large, long,
thin. Light
marks w/
rusty
abdomen tip.
Flies fast and
low patrols
over water.
Perches on
and hangs
from tree
leaves.

Compare:

Unicorn
Clubtail,
Eastern
Ringtail,
Arrow
Clubtail



Notes from the field – Russet-tipped Clubtail:

The most frequently seen of Northern Virginia's "hanging clubtails" (the *Stylurus* genus), you still have to be in the right place at the right time to see this impressive dragonfly. It appears to prefer wide, shallow, sunny creeks and sections of shallow river. It especially likes Goose Creek in Loudoun Co., Accotink and Occoquan Bays, and the stretch of Potomac River that runs from Bles Park in Sterling to Theodore Roosevelt Island.

A late summer species, your best chance of seeing this clubtail comes in August and September, on a sunny afternoon or early evening in one of our riverside parks. Look for a long, slender dragonfly flying very low over the water, making repeated patrols of 100 feet or so, with constant figure eights and that bright russet-orange club. When it's not patrolling over the water, it's often perched on branch and leaf tips, with its abdomen hanging down (hence the common name for this genus). Because it seems to like sunny branch tips along forest and river edges, it's slightly more visible when perching than some clubtail species.

I have two favorite Russet-tipped memories. The first has me standing knee-deep in a warm coastal plain creek on a sunny, August afternoon. A large orange-clubbed dragonfly with a low, powerful



flight had been zipping up and down the creek, and I was trying to get a closer look. Now that I was in his element, he flew right up to me, looped once around my legs and sped off with a flash of rusty orange and pale green.

The second, has me in the right place, right time. As I walked down an old road along a sandy creek, young Russets were emerging all around me. Dozens of males and females, hanging from vines and low branches, their bright abdomens drying in the August sun.