

Splendid Clubtail



Splendid Clubtail (*Gomphus lineatifrons*) – 2.6", 67-69 mm

Habitat Conservation Alert!

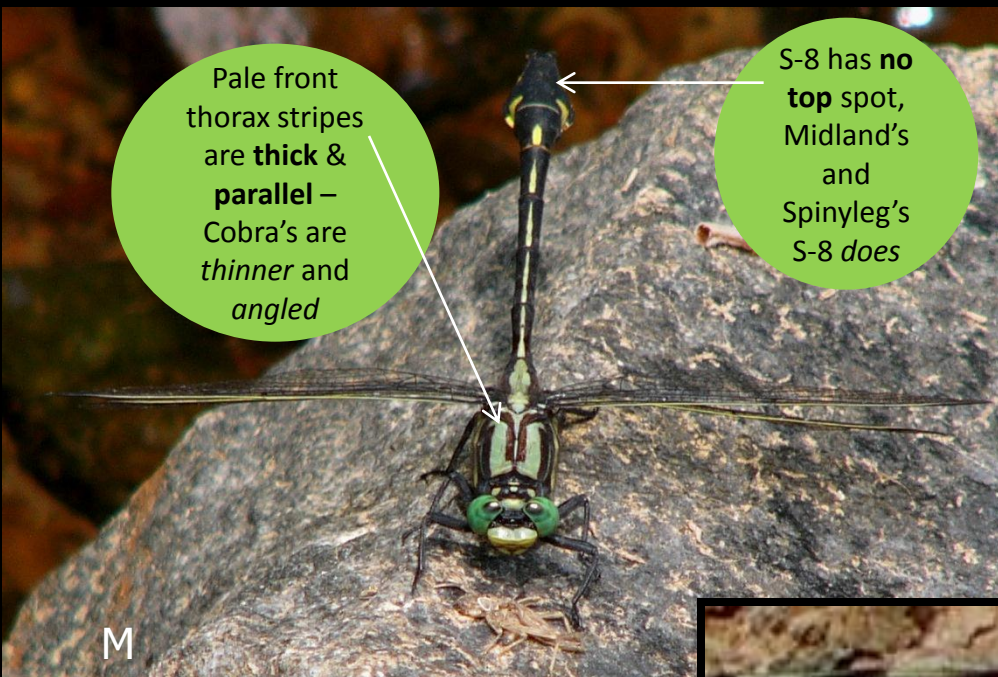
Flight Record:
(5/28-6/15)
Peaks in June

Rare

Habitat:
Clean, shallow, large streams & creeks with sunny rocks & forested shores.

First Glance:
Medium.
Black w/ yellow marks.
Large club, long body.
Perches on rocks, logs, banks and shoreline shrubs.

Compare:
Clubtails:
Cobra,
Midland,
Spinyleg



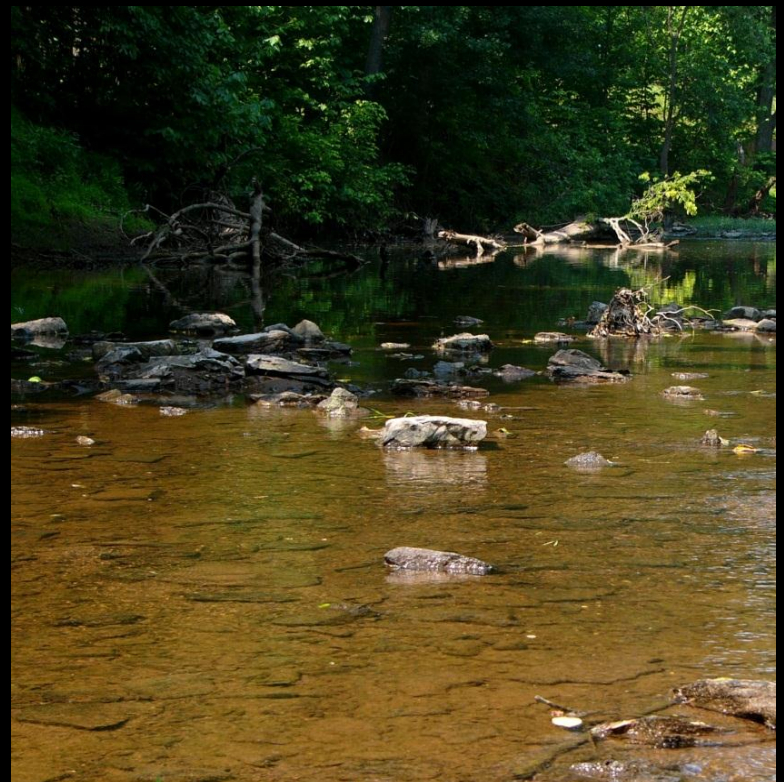
- S-8 side-spot:**
- Large as S-9 side-spot
 - Touches front & lower edges of S-8 segment
 - Square-like shape

Cobra's S-8 side-spot is *very small & doesn't touch lower edge*

Notes from the field – Splendid Clubtail:

Although relatively rare in Northern Virginia, there does appear to be a somewhat stable population in parts of the Bull Run watershed, and they've also been seen in the Nokesville area. This species needs what our area has little of – clean, stable, shallow, rocky streams with forested shores. Find one wide enough to have sunny sections, then settle down onto a comfortable rock in late May or June, and you may be lucky enough to see this seldom-seen dragonfly. In my limited experience, they appear to be most active from noon to 3PM, possibly because the sun is directly over their stream and not blocked by shoreline trees.

Splendids most resemble Cobra and Midland Clubtails, although they could also be confused with Black-shouldered Spinylegs at first glance. They're larger than the first two, and smaller than the last. However, when dragonflies are zipping up and down a stream, or perched on a tree branch 30 feet away, a few tenths of an inch doesn't help me too much. A Splendid may be too large to be a Least Clubtail, and too small to be a Dragon-hunter, but to tell them apart from other medium-sized clubtails I need a good pair of binoculars. It's all about their two ends – focus on the front of the thorax and face, and the top and sides of their club. The differences are small, but clear and distinct. Use the ID tips shown on the previous page along with a pair of binos, and you'll be fine.



Notes from the field – Splendid Clubtail:

Accounts of this species often describe them as being slower and less agile than other clubtails. Perhaps I haven't had enough experience to notice this difference. Regardless, they seemed pretty quick and coordinated to me. They appeared comfortable on low, flat surfaces, and once they found a good perch, it was often relatively easy to get quite close. At the one stream where I observed them for several days, they perched on stones in mid-stream, along rocky banks, logs and fallen leaves on sunny forest shores, as well as on branches of understory saplings and shrubs.

It took me awhile to zero in on the specific field-marks that separate them from Cobra and Midland Clubtails, the two species in our area they most resemble. I didn't have a permit to use my net, so depended entirely on binoculars and photographs. I really wasn't sure what I'd seen until getting home to enlarge my photos on the computer. It was close examination of the upper photo that finally convinced me I had in fact seen my first Splendid Clubtail! I realized I had to go back and get close up photos of those face stripes – essential for separating Splendids from Cobras and Midlands. On my third visit to get good shots, I was in the middle of the stream on my knees, peering through my camera into the wary green eyes of the male in the lower photo. I finally captured those all important, *thin* face stripes! But not before alarming, and possibly amusing, several fishermen who couldn't



quite figure out what I was doing. When I tried to explain, they smiled, nodded, and hurried off downstream ☺