

Twin-spotted Spiketail



**Twin-spotted Spiketail (*Cordulegaster maculata*) – 2.8", 64-76 mm** **Habitat Conservation Alert!**

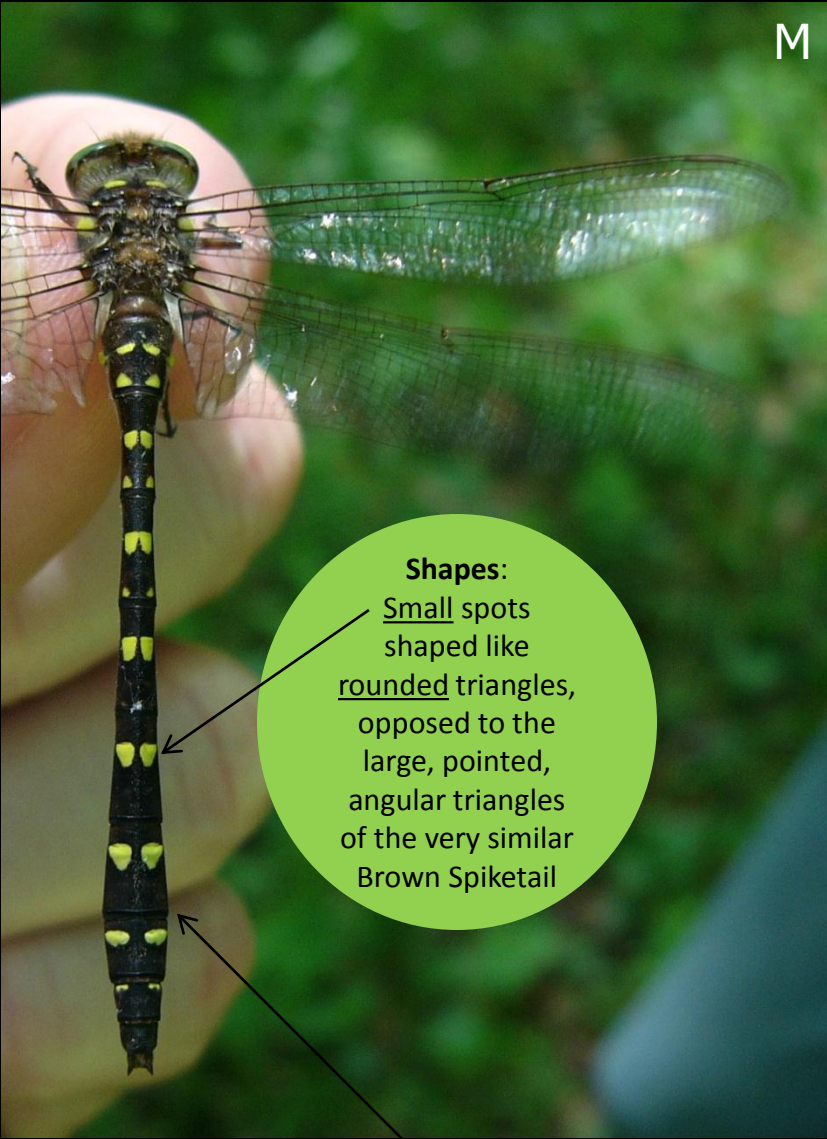
**Flight Record:**  
(4/18-5/13)  
Peaks  
late April-  
early May.

*Uncommon*

**Habitat:**  
Clean forest  
streams -  
can be  
found in  
somewhat  
larger  
streams  
than other  
spiketails.

**First  
Glance:**  
Large,  
black-  
brown.  
Flight  
straight,  
fast. Low,  
repeated  
patrols up  
and down  
middle of  
streams.

**Compare:**  
Brown  
Spiketail



**Shapes:**  
Small spots  
shaped like  
rounded triangles,  
opposed to the  
large, pointed,  
angular triangles  
of the very similar  
Brown Spiketail

**Colors:**  
Abdomen is black to dark brown  
with bright yellow markings,  
opposed to the light brown abdomen  
w/ white to faded-yellow markings  
of the Brown Spiketail



Male Twin-spotted's abdomen is clubbed,  
Brown Spiketail's is not.

### Notes from the field – Twin-spotted Spiketail:

The most wide-spread spiketail, Twin-spotteds are somewhat more adaptable than their cousins and can be found in larger, more typical forest streams than other members of this genus. They still need small, relatively clean, stable streams, but can coexist with fish and don't require the tiny, spring-fed seepages and trickles preferred by our Brown, Arrowhead and Tiger Spiketails.

This species is a perfect example of why I decided to embark on this project. Most field guides describe Twin-spotted Spiketails as being *common* and found in *trout streams*. Well, Northern VA hasn't seen a trout, at least not a wild one, in decades. So do we still have spiketails, and if so, where? I wanted to create a record of what was common or rare **here** - in Fairfax, Loudoun, Arlington and Prince William counties. After 10 years, and 300 surveys at 75 sites, I've only found Twin-spotteds in 2 streams, and am aware of fellow dragonfly hunters finding them at only 3 additional local sites. So clearly, they aren't common here, and suburban streams too degraded to support trout can still hold a few spiketails.

So, in our area they are uncommon to rare, and need small, perennial, forest streams with stable, relatively un-eroded banks and a noticeable, steady current. They don't need the cold, highly-oxygenated, rocky waters of a trout stream, but do need streams with halfway decent water quality and relatively low stormwater surges.



This Twin-spotted has greener eyes than the similar Brown Spiketail.

Look for this species in small, year-round streams at Huntley Meadows Park, Meadowwood Management Area, Riverbend Park and tributaries of the Popes Head Creek watershed. And remember, this is one of our *earliest* dragonflies. They start patrolling their forest streams as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of April and are gone by mid-May. They make long, linear patrols, low over the water's surface, so pick a comfortable stream-side spot and keep your eyes focused on the middle of the stream. You may need to wait for 10 to 20 minutes before the resident male makes a pass. If you're lucky enough to catch a glimpse of this green-eyed, bright-spotted, ephemeral remnant of Northern Virginia's less developed past, you'll agree it's well worth the wait.