

Widow Skimmer



Widow Skimmer (*Libellula luctuosa*) – 1.8", 42-50 mm

Flight Record:

(5/12-

10/02)

Peaks

July-August.

Common

Habitat:

Vegetated pond, lake and marsh edges. Also meadows.

First Glance:

Medium.

Long, black & white wings, with blue body (male), black blotched wings with yellow & brown body (female).

Compare:

Common Whitetail, Twelve-spotted Skimmer



Males have unique combo of **1 dark & 1 light blotch** per wing



Females have **one large dark blotch** per wing

Notes from the field – Widow Skimmer:

The bold, contrasting colors on the wings of the male Widow Skimmer make this one of the most recognizable dragonflies in our area. Those wings give it an almost butterfly-like appearance, and one wonders at first if an acrobatic swallowtail hasn't just visited the pond edge. As you can see in several of these photos, their beautiful wings are often torn and tattered, more so than other species it seems. They're a member of the King Skimmer genus, so perhaps it's their intensely territorial nature that leads to so many injured wings. The individual in the upper photo is missing almost an entire rear wing, but was still able to fly faster than this dragonfly geek could run.

If you're looking for Widows, check the vegetated edges of your local pond or marsh any sunny day, June-September. They prefer tall plants for perching, so be sure to allow the native grasses and wildflowers to grow large and thick around your neighborhood waterways. Shallow, marshy pools are their favorite. However, you're just as likely to see this showy species in a dry meadow as at a pond, as they seem to love large meadows more than any other dragonfly. Walking through the expansive upland meadows of Manassas Battlefield Park I've seen dozens in just one morning.



If you look at photos of male Widows, you'll see varying degrees of pruinosity (waxy blue powder) on their abdomens. You can still see yellow lines under this young male's first developing layer of pruinosity.