

Dragonflies of Northern Virginia Species List

- The following 72 species have been positively identified in Northern Virginia. For the purposes of this website, Northern Virginia is defined as Fairfax County, Arlington County, City of Alexandria, Prince William County and eastern Loudoun County (Rt. 15 is the east/west divide for Loudoun county - see [N. VA map](#)).
- Of the 72 species listed, 65 are described and illustrated on this website. The 7 species not described on this website have only been seen a few times in this area and/or are especially elusive, and I have yet to find or photograph them.
- From the beginning of this project I only wanted to include descriptions of species that I had been able to find, photograph and observe myself. This allows descriptions to include first-hand accounts and represent dragonflies that the average naturalist or dragonfly geek could actually expect to find. I've seen and photographed all 65 species in Northern Virginia since 2003. I'm always looking to add to those 65 descriptions, and hope to find and photograph more of this area's dragonflies each year.

List Criteria

Two or more identifiable photos or specimens found within the boundaries of Northern Virginia since 1980.

- ❖ **“Two or more”** helps rule out strays, weather vagrants, mis-identifications or other one-time freak occurrences. **“Since 1980”** is due to the intense, comprehensive development in this area from the early '80s on, which drastically altered this area's landscape, watersheds and aquatic habitats (i.e. some species found prior to 1980 may no longer be able to survive here and may never be seen in Northern VA again, e.g. Skillet Clubtail, last seen in our area in 1915, or American Emerald, 1969).
- ❖ In addition to the 72 species that fit the above criteria, there are several other species that have been seen, or could be seen, in Northern Virginia, but may not be current confirmed residents. Scroll to the *end* of the list to see these [Past, Pending and Possible Species](#).



Dragonflies of Northern Virginia

72 species (as of August, 2012)

Italics = not included on this website (7 species)

Petaltails (Petaluridae)

1. Gray Petaltail

Darners (Aeshnidae)

1. Common Green Darner
2. Comet Darner
3. Swamp Darner
4. Cyrano Darner
5. Harlequin Darner
6. Taper-tailed Darner
7. Fawn Darner
8. Springtime Darner
9. Shadow Darner

Clubtails (Gomphidae)

1. Dragonhunter
2. Ashy Clubtail
3. Lancet Clubtail
4. Spine-crowned Clubtail
5. *Rapids Clubtail (not yet included on this website)*
6. Cobra Clubtail
7. Splendid Clubtail
8. Midland Clubtail
9. Arrow Clubtail
10. Russet-tipped Clubtail
11. *Laura's Clubtail (not yet included on this website)*
12. Black-shouldered Spinyleg
13. Unicorn Clubtail
14. Eastern Least Clubtail (previously Least Clubtail)
15. Common Sanddragon
16. Eastern Ringtail
17. Sable Clubtail

Spiketails (Cordulegastridae)

1. Tiger Spiketail
2. Twin-spotted Spiketail
3. Brown Spiketail
4. Arrowhead Spiketail

Cruisers (Macromiidae)

1. Stream Cruiser
2. Swift River Cruiser (previously Illinois River Cruiser)
3. Royal River Cruiser



Emeralds (Corduliidae)

1. [Uhler's Sundragon](#)
2. [Prince Baskettail](#)
3. [Common Baskettail](#)
4. *Slender Baskettail* (previously Stripe-winged Baskettail) - not yet on this website
5. [Mocha Emerald](#)
6. [Clamp-tipped Emerald](#)
7. [Fine-lined Emerald](#)
8. [Umber Shadowdragon](#)
9. *Stygian Shadowdragon* (check last page of [Umber Shadowdragon](#) for info)

Skimmers (Libellulidae)

1. [Widow Skimmer](#)
2. [Common Whitetail](#)
3. [Twelve-spotted Skimmer](#)
4. [Painted Skimmer](#)
5. [Blue Corporal](#)
6. [Spangled Skimmer](#)
7. *Yellow-sided Skimmer* (not yet on this website)
8. *Golden-winged Skimmer* (check [Needham's Skimmer](#) for info)
9. [Needham's Skimmer](#)
10. [Great Blue Skimmer](#)
11. [Slaty Skimmer](#)
12. [Bar-winged Skimmer](#)
13. [Blue-faced Meadowhawk](#)
14. [Autumn Meadowhawk](#) (previously Yellow-legged Meadowhawk)
15. [Ruby Meadowhawk](#)
16. [Band-winged Meadowhawk](#)
17. [Little Blue Dragonlet](#)
18. [Eastern Amberwing](#)
19. [Blue Dasher](#)
20. [Eastern Pondhawk](#) (also called Common Pondhawk)
21. [Wandering Glider](#)
22. [Spot-winged Glider](#)
23. [Black Saddlebags](#)
24. [Carolina Saddlebags](#)
25. [Four-spotted Pennant](#)
26. *Dot-tailed Whiteface* (we don't yet have photos of this species in N. VA, but I've added it to the list since two reliable sightings have occurred since 2000, and this dragonfly is uniquely marked and difficult to mis-identify) – not yet on this website
27. [Halloween Pennant](#)
28. [Banded Pennant](#)
29. [Calico Pennant](#)

Data Sources:

P.J. Dunn	T. Robison
K. Munroe	S. Roble
R. Orr	K. Sheffield
A. Rabin	J. Waggener

and Odonatacentral.org



Past, Pending and Possible Species

Past (these species *may* still be here, but since no one has documented them in 35+ years - despite several recent, long-term, comprehensive surveys - it seems unlikely):

- Skillet Clubtail – Fairfax Co. (1915)
- Elusive Clubtail – Loudoun Co. (1975) – this species lives up to its name, and may very well still be here, simply undetected
- American Emerald – Loudoun Co. (1969)
- Martha’s Pennant – Fairfax Co. (1975)

Pending (the following species have a recent, *single* sighting in our area – a second confirmed sighting could put them on my list):

- Green-faced Clubtail – Fairfax Co. (2010)
- Southern Pygmy Clubtail – Prince William Co. (1998)
- Cherry-faced Meadowhawk – Fairfax Co. (2003)
- White-faced Meadowhawk – Prince William Co. (2010)
- Striped Saddlebags – Fairfax Co. (2007)
- Red Saddlebags – Loudoun Co. (2012)
- Double-ringed Pennant – Fairfax Co. (2009)
- Swift Setwing – Prince William Co. (2008)

Possible (none of the following have yet been documented in N. VA, but they are in range and N VA may have at least a small piece of their habitat type, or even an existing, isolated population that no one’s reported):

- Ocelated Darner (maybe)
- Green-striped Darner (probably)
- Black-tipped Darner (unlikely)
- Spadderdock Darner (unlikely)
- Rusty Snaketail (maybe)
- Chesapeake Snaketail (maybe)
- Appalachian Snaketail (maybe)
- Riverine Clubtail (unlikely)
- Allegheny River Cruiser (maybe)
- “Georgia” River Cruiser, subspecies of Swift River Cruiser (probably)
- Tree-top Emerald (probably)
- Sely’s Sundragon (maybe)
- Robust Baskettail (probably)
- Roseate Skimmer (maybe) - southern stray, recently expanding their range north: one sighting in Washington, DC, one in Howard Co., MD, two near Richmond, VA
- Elfin Skimmer (unlikely)
- Variegated Meadowhawk (unlikely) – a western stray, one recent sighting in Prince Georges Co., MD.