

Petaltail family - *Petaluridae*

First Glance:

*Large, black-gray coloring, long thin body with dark separated eyes and clear wings.
Perches frequently on tree trunks, and sometimes on people.*

ID tips:

Flight – relatively weak flight, usually up and around tree trunks.

Hunting – mostly gleaning

Perching – frequently: on sunny tree trunks, logs and branches.

Body Type – smallish head with separated eyes and long, thin abdomen.

Wings – long, thin and unpatterned

Oviposting – insert/inject eggs directly into mud, sand and leaves of forest seeps.

General Info:

Species in N. VA – 1 (on website)

Size Range – 3"

N. VA Flight Period – June-July (possibly late May to early August)

Habitat Types – tiny, flowing forest seeps with nearby sunny clearings.



Gray Petaltail

Notes:

- This family has only two species - one, the Gray Petaltail lives here in the east. The Black Petaltail lives out west and shares the same specialized habitat needs.
- This is the most primitive dragonfly in the U.S. – its relatives flew alongside dinosaurs during the Jurassic period.
- Although often skittish when patrolling its tiny forest seeps, it's quite tame when perched. If you stand still in the sun nearby, there's a good chance it will land on you (see photo on next page).
- Unlike other dragonfly species, petaltail larvae appear to spend some time out of the water, living under moist leaves around their seeps, like earthworms and salamanders.



Gray Petaltail

Petaltail:



Gray Petaltail



Gray Petaltail
(perched on my shorts!)

