

Arrowhead Spiketail



# Arrowhead Spiketail (*Cordulegaster obliqua*) – 3.0", 72-81 mm

# Habitat Conservation Alert!

**Flight Record:**  
(5/28-6/27)  
Peaks in June

*Uncommon*

**Habitat:**  
Clean, stable, very small, shallow, seep-fed forest streams, often temporary, w/ silty substrate & vegetated banks. Look in nearby sunny clearings.

**First Glance:**  
Long & thin, dark w/ yellow marks. Flight straight and slow. Patrols low over middle of streams, hunts in sunny clearings. Perches often & at a diagonal angle.

**Compare:**  
other spiketails



M

Milky green eyes and unique **arrow** markings



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Two thoracic side stripes



F

Female has **thicker** body and **spike-like** ovipositor →

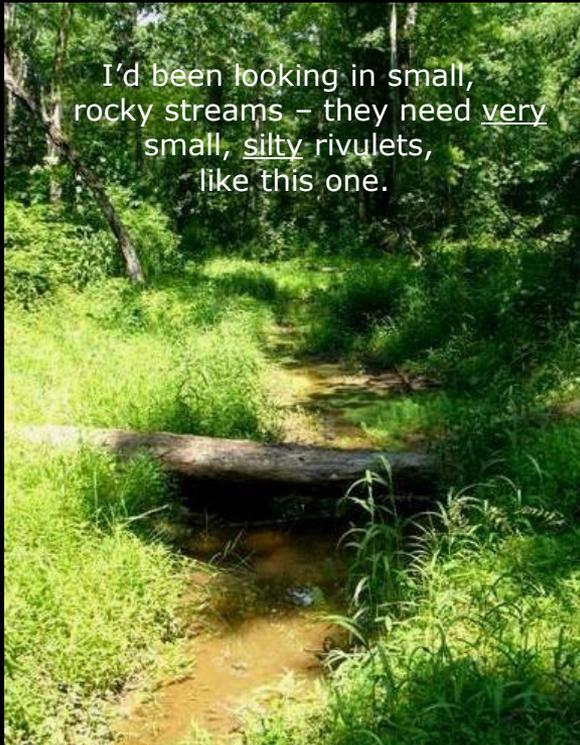


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Perches at an **angle**

## Notes from the field – Arrowhead Spiketail:

For several years, this and the Twin-spotted Spiketail were my Great White Whales! I spent countless hours searching dozens of sites all across Northern VA, and never saw hide nor hair of either. I obsessively read every field guide description of both spiketails, until I'd almost memorized them. When I finally found a stream with Arrowhead Spiketails, I realized my habitat search-image had been a bit off (see lower photo). Just a tiny bit, but these boldly-marked forest sprites are true habitat specialists, and that tiny bit was just enough to lead me astray.



I'd been looking in small, rocky streams – they need very small, silty rivulets, like this one.

Combined with the fact that the type of stream needed by this species (or more specifically, by its larvae) is almost non-existent in Northern VA, I'm lucky I ever found them. A more accurate statement - this type of stream is *now* almost non-existent in our area. The intense stormwater flows that come off impervious surfaces (roadways, parking lots, roofs) in urban and suburban areas, scour these small, fragile streams and turn them into eroded gullies where few creatures can live. The shallow, seepage streams (or rivulets), stable and clean enough to support spiketail larvae (which take several years to mature) were more common before Northern VA became so developed. Search out the less-developed corners of Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William Counties and look for quite woodlands with stable, un-eroded networks of tiny streams. Find one with just enough sun to grow grass along its banks, and you may be treated to one of the most interesting and bizarrely-patterned insects in Northern VA.

**Notes from the field – Arrowhead Spiketail:** As you can see, to call this a stream would be a stretch. It's more of a rivulet, or flowing seepage. Note how it's mucky, with fine silt, some sand, small pebbles and grass-lined banks. Meadowood and Riverbend parks are good sites to search.

I watched a male patrolling this rivulet on two occasions.



A female oviposited straight into this rivulet (same site as left photo) for several minutes.

