

Band-winged Meadowhawk



Band-winged Meadowhawk (*Sympetrum semicinctum*) – 1.3", 24-31 mm **Habitat Conservation Alert!**

Flight

Record:

(6/26-8/07)

Seen most early to mid July.

Rare

Habitat:

Sunny, shallow, stream-fed, marshy pools and small ponds.

First

Glance:

Tiny, red to orange.

Hind wing patches.

Perches frequently on tips of low vegetation.

Compare:

other Meadowhawks



Large hind wing patches, smaller on front wings

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Abdomen side has small, black triangles

Female has lighter wing patches and body markings



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Notes from the field – Band-winged Meadowhawk:

The smallest of our meadowhawks, this is also the easiest of the group to identify – no other *Sympetrum* has large wing patches. No bigger than a horsefly, it would be easy to overlook if not for its almost glowing red abdomen. They appear to be quite scarce in Northern Va. I've only seen them in the north-western corner of our area: two sites in Loudoun Co., and one site just over the county line in western Fairfax. Look for them on July afternoons in clean, stream-fed meadow pools or shallow ponds with lots of emergent vegetation. They stay low and often fly among the sedges, rushes and marsh grasses along the pool's edge.



They're so small they seem to literally disappear, sometimes leaving dragonfly watchers wondering if they've seen a mirage. The first time I saw one, it was on the edge of a tiny, marshy pool. I leaned in with my camera, and it zipped off, vanishing into the tall grass. I circled the pool and surrounding meadow for over 30 minutes before I found him again. Moving slower I was able to get closer and get one of my favorite shots of any dragonfly (the title slide for this species). The only other time I've had a good look was at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve in Leesburg. Andy Rabin, a Loudoun Co. naturalist, showed me a spring-fed, meadow pool, thick with marsh grasses and close to a dozen males and females. They were mating (above photo), zipping in and out of vegetation, and defending their tiny territories.