

Comet Darner



Comet Darner (*Anax longipes*) – 3.2", 75-87 mm

Habitat Conservation Alert!

Flight

Record:

(5/22-8/28)

Peaks late
June- mid
July.

Uncommon

Habitat:

Shallow,
sunny,
vegetated
ponds with
forested
edges

First

Glance:

Glowing
orange-red.

Largest
dragonfly
on the
pond.

Powerful,
fast, low
flier. Makes
aggressive
patrols.

Compare:

Common
Green
Darner

M



Long legs for
catching large prey,
including other
dragonflies

M



M



Female (not pictured) shares
the lime-green thorax, but has
a red-brown abdomen with tan
to bluish markings. Both **lack**
the blue & black "nose" dot of
the Common Green Darner

Notes from the field – Comet Darner:

One of our largest dragonflies – only the Swamp Darner, Dragonhunter and Royal River Cruiser are as big, and none of them are neon red!

This is the lord of the pond, and the top dragonfly predator at any site it visits. I saw one flying off to feed in the trees with *two* Black Saddlebags (decent-sized insects themselves), clutched tightly in those long, red, black-hooked legs. I guess he was hungry, and one dragonfly just wasn't enough.

Comets have expansive territories that may cover several miles and a network of small, shallow, forest-edged ponds. They'll visit your pond, leave for 30 minutes to patrol other sites, then return. The male's behavior can be mesmerizing: long, low, fast, repeated patrols of glowing red, just over the water's surface. They're looking for prey, defending their territory, and hoping to find the elusive *female* Comet Darner, which I still haven't found. I've seen Comets at seven ponds and two meadows, and every one was a flame-colored male. Perhaps females hunt in forests.

My first sighting of a Comet Darner is etched in my mind. It was the end of a long July day, full of many dragonflies and fun photos. On my drive home, I pulled over on a whim, to search a shallow, marshy, storm-water pond on the edge of



the highway. I waded out into the water. My eyes followed the flight of a Unicorn Clubtail across the pond, when suddenly a glowing, crimson-red flash glided across the water and banked right in front of me – the evening sun reflecting off its neon abdomen. A Comet Darner! I watched, surprised and spell-bond, then sped home and called my dragonfly buddies. We all came back the next morning (July 4th), and watched three Comet males hunting over two adjoining ponds. It was the equal to any Independence Day fireworks display I'd ever seen.