

Eastern Pondhawk



Eastern Pondhawk (*Erythemis simplicicollis*) – 1.7", 38-44 mm

Flight Record:

(5/10-10/18)

Peaks

July-August.

Common

Habitat:

Most aquatic habitats, favors sunny vegetated shorelines and nearby meadows.

First

Glance:

Small.

Bright blue (male), green, black & white (female), both have white cerci.

Compare:

Blue Dasher, Blue Corporal, Dragonlet





Juv M

How confusing!
Juv males have the same markings as females.



F

Cerci:

Male cerci, including juv males, are longer and closer together.

Female cerci (upper right photo) are shorter and more widely spaced.



Confusing juvenile males:

In most members of the skimmer family, such as pondhawks, females and juv males have similar markings.

In some skimmer species, e.g. Common Whitetails, you can still use wing markings to differentiate.

But in many skimmers, like the juvenile male pondhawk, cerci are the best way to tell juv males from females.

Notes from the field – Eastern Pondhawk:

(also called Common Pondhawk)

In this species, the female clearly outshines the male. Half a dozen dragonflies have colors similar to the male pondhawk, but the bold black, white and emerald green pattern of the female is unique among east coast dragonflies. I've been hunting insects since I was a little kid, and chasing dragonflies in particular since '98, but the very common "green jacket" still catches my eye every time.

This species is a habitat generalist, found along the vegetated shorelines of ponds, lakes, rivers, sunny streams, marshes and even pathway puddles. The female especially is quite a wanderer, often found far from water – look for her in meadows, brushy fields and forest edges. Chasing its insect prey (including other dragonflies) May thru October, this impressive predator has one of the longest flight seasons of our dragonflies. Often catching and subduing insects heavier than itself, it certainly deserves the name of *hawk*.

One of my earliest memories of catching insects with my father has me pulling a brilliant green and black pondhawk out of my net – so bright and ferocious, I knew I must have caught a rare and valuable creature.



A Robber Fly drains the life out of a male pondhawk



Lucky for us, it's not at all rare, because with all the insects it eats, pondhawks certainly are valuable.