

Great Blue Skimmer



Great Blue Skimmer (*Libellula vibrans*) – 2.3", 56-63 mm

Flight

Record:

(5/28-10/31)

Peaks

July-August.

Fairly
Common

Habitat:

Shallow,
still waters,
usually in
forested
settings:
swamps,
forest pools
& ditches,
slow sections
of stream,
backwaters.

First

Glance:

Large, blue
(males),
brown or
pale
(females).
Flies low over
woodland
pools &
perches in
nearby, low
vegetation.

Compare:

Skimmers:
Bar-winged
& Slaty

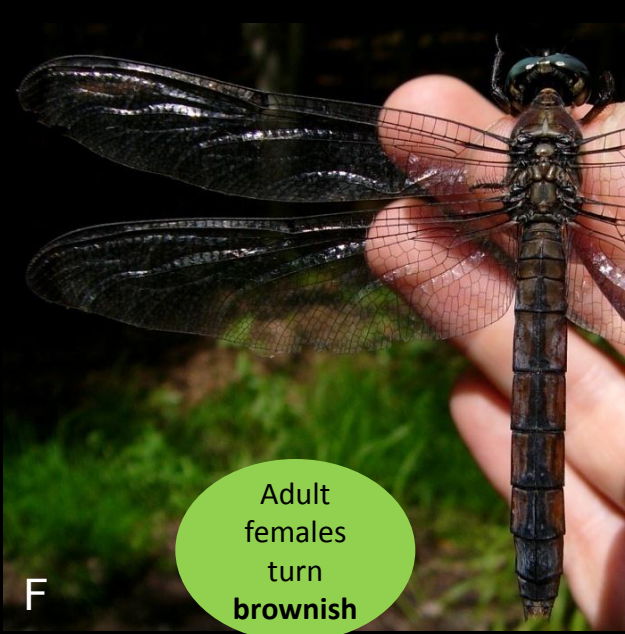


Both
sexes
(adults):
Blue
eyes

Both sexes
(all ages):
white face



Young of **both**
sexes have
this very
different body
coloring



Adult
females
turn
brownish

Notes from the field – Great Blue Skimmer:

Our largest skimmer, Great Blues are a member of the Libellula genus, often referred to as King Skimmers. The name comes from the fact that Libellula skimmers are large, colorful, aggressive and usually rule whatever pond they visit.

Despite their size, Great Blues don't fully fit the King Skimmer persona, as they generally steer clear of the large, sunny ponds and marshes their cousins covet and battle over. This species prefers small, forested pools, puddles and swamps, one of the few dragonflies tolerant of shady wetlands. Less visible and aggressive than other King Skimmers, it's always a treat to see this large, beautiful insect. Look for them in July and August in shallow, forested wetlands – even a pathway puddle may attract a few of these kingly skimmers.

Their color comes in part from a waxy pigment called pruinescence. This pruinosity fades with the season, as you can see in the above photo, taken in late August. Possibly the most important field-mark for this species is the combo of blue eyes and a white face – no other large skimmer has it.

My favorite Great Blue encounter is captured in the lower photo. A big male landed on the edge of a field in Huntley Meadows Park with a large



stinkbug in its mandibles. Unconcerned with my presence, it calmly munched away, and I watched as the stinkbug quickly disappeared.