

Little Blue
Dragonlet



Little Blue Dragonlet (*Erythrodiplax minuscula*) – 1.0", 25-27 mm **Habitat Conservation Alert!**

Flight

Record:

(5/31-8/12)

Seen most in June.

Rare

Habitat:

Small, sunny, shallow, ponds, pools and ditches - preferably fishless.

First

Glance:

Tiny. Blue male, checkered female. Dark head & abdomen tip. Perches low in wetland vegetation. Stays away from other dragonflies.

Compare:

Blue Dasher, Blue Corporal, Eastern Pondhawk



Very small **rusty smudge** at base of hind wing



No stripes on male thorax – Blue Dashers have *stripes*



Abdomen has **black tip & pale cerci**

Female & juv male are checkered cream & brown/black



Eyes & face dark – Blue Dasher has *green eyes & white face*

Giff Beaton

M

M

F

Notes from the field – Little Blue Dragonlet:

The second smallest dragonfly in Northern VA, I actually think of it as our tiniest. Eastern Amberwings are ¼" smaller, but their colored wings and spunky behavior make them seem more substantial than this tiny and near invisible Dragonlet. I've only seen two individuals, both in western rural Fairfax Co., and if I'd blinked at the wrong moment I'd have missed them. They usually stay low in vegetation and stick to small, shallow pools and puddles, trying to avoid fish, and the larger, more aggressive members of their skimmer family.

Look for them in June and July in shallow, sunny, grassy pools with water less than 2 feet deep. The photo to your right is typical of what they like – shallow and vegetated. The perched blue dragonfly barely visible in the left of the picture is actually a Blue Dasher, but this plant-filled puddle is perfect for Dragonlets.

The easiest way to tell them apart from Blue Dashers and Eastern Pondhawks is to look at their heads. Dragonlets have dark eyes and faces – dashers and pondhawks have eyes and faces of various colors, but always light. The difference in thorax sides and abdomen tips seals the deal.



Like many skimmers, the female has a very different pattern. But she's still tiny, and has the combo of a black abdomen tip with pale (usually white) cerci – that combo separates her from female Blue Dashers (dark cerci). More importantly, Little Blue Dragonlets are *quite* rare in Northern VA – after 10 years of endless searching I've found two. Odds are you'll probably never see one in this area, while Blue Dashers are everywhere.

The female photo on the previous page was taken in Georgia and generously donated by Giff Beaton, author of the excellent field guide, Dragonflies of Georgia and the Southeast.