

Painted Skimmer





# Painted Skimmer (*Libellula semifasciata*) – 1.7", 45-48 mm

**Flight Record:**  
(4/27-8/20)  
Peaks  
May-June.

*Fairly  
Common*

**Habitat:**  
Shallow,  
vegetated  
ponds,  
pools and  
puddles.

**First  
Glance:**  
Medium &  
thick-  
bodied.  
Orange-  
yellow, w/  
lightly  
patterned  
wings.  
Frequent  
percher in  
fields and  
shoreline  
vegetation,  
usually low.

**Compare:**  
Halloween  
Pennant



Translucent  
abdomen allows  
sun to warm  
blood & organs

M

Unique  
combo of  
**orange wing  
marks**  
with yellow  
& black  
abdomen



F

Female similar,  
w/ wider  
abdomen and  
less bright  
markings



M

## Notes from the field – Painted Skimmer:

Another member of the King Skimmer genus (*Libellula*), this species is somewhat more weary and less aggressive than its royal cousins. Although relatively common, you may go for a long time without seeing this colorful dragonfly. Why? Two reasons: flight season and habitat.

A species of late spring and early summer, they fade away by July, just when other king skimmers are appearing in large numbers and taking over the local dragonfly scene. Very few Painteds are left by August, and by then they look faded, weary and wing-torn. In fact, after 12 years of July dragonfly counts in Reston, we have yet to see one during the count. This has as much to do with Reston's habitat, as it does with timing. Painted Skimmers aren't interested in the typical suburban pond – they require shallow, marshy ponds or pools, usually less than 2 feet deep. The few times I've seen them in Reston it's been in May, around our shallow beaver wetlands.

In the right habitat, they can in fact be quite common. Look for them in shallow coastal plain ponds, marshy spring puddles and meadow pools. Bles Park, wetlands off Gunston Hall Road, and Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge are three good Painted Skimmer sites. Don't forget to look for them in fields and meadows near wetlands, as they often perch in tall grass away from water.



This teneral (recently emerged juvenile), has very pale markings. Its colors will darken as it dries in the sun of a late April morning.