

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



F

Female similar,
w/ wider
abdomen and
less bright
markings

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



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.