

Twin-spotted Spiketail



Twin-spotted Spiketail (*Cordulegaster maculata*) – 2.8", 64-76 mm **Habitat Conservation Alert!**

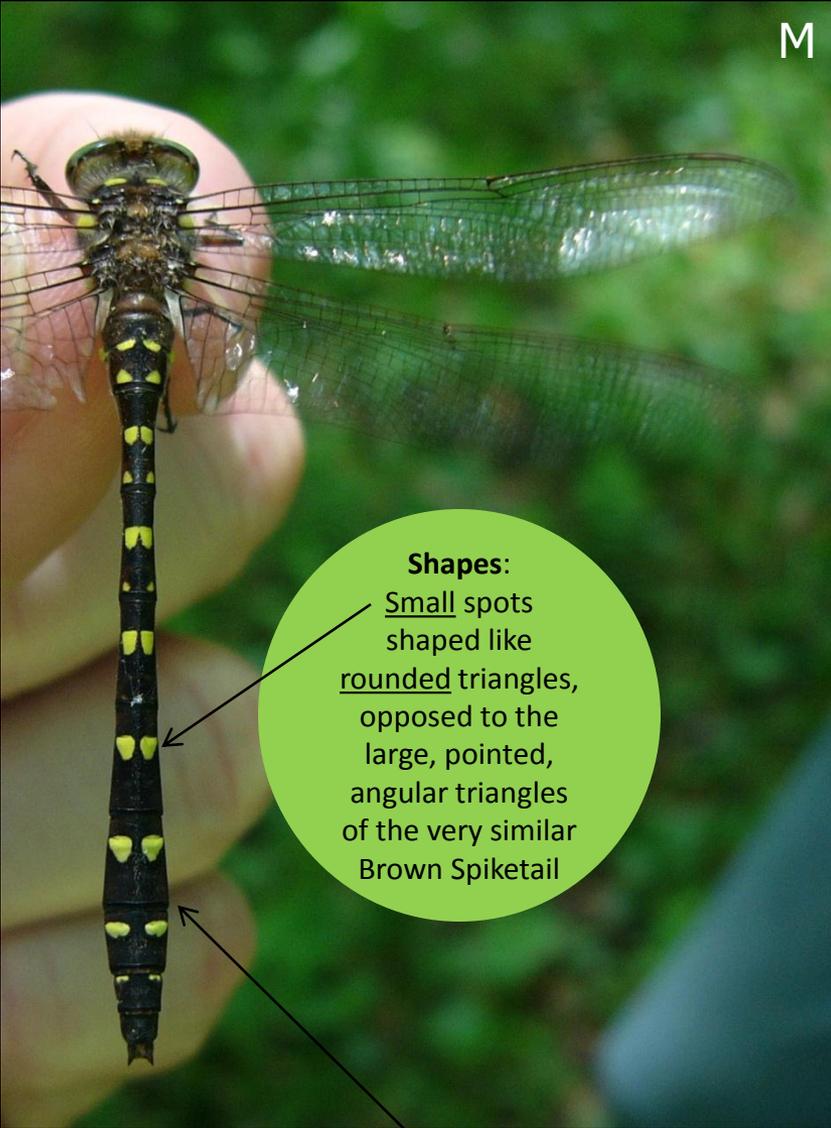
Flight Record:
(4/18-5/13)
Peaks
late April-
early May.

Uncommon

Habitat:
Clean forest
streams -
can be
found in
somewhat
larger
streams
than other
spiketails.

First Glance:
Large,
black-
brown.
Flight
straight,
fast. Low,
repeated
patrols up
and down
middle of
streams.

Compare:
Brown
Spiketail



Shapes:
Small spots
shaped like
rounded triangles,
opposed to the
large, pointed,
angular triangles
of the very similar
Brown Spiketail

Colors:
Abdomen is black to dark brown
with bright yellow markings,
opposed to the light brown abdomen
w/ white to faded-yellow markings
of the Brown Spiketail



Male Twin-spotted's abdomen is clubbed,
Brown Spiketail's is not.

Notes from the field – Twin-spotted Spiketail:

The most wide-spread spiketail, Twin-spotteds are somewhat more adaptable than their cousins and can be found in larger, more typical forest streams than other members of this genus. They still need small, relatively clean, stable streams, but can coexist with fish and don't require the tiny, spring-fed seepages and trickles preferred by our Brown, Arrowhead and Tiger Spiketails.

This species is a perfect example of why I decided to embark on this project. Most field guides describe Twin-spotted Spiketails as being *common* and found in *trout streams*. Well, Northern VA hasn't seen a trout, at least not a wild one, in decades. So do we still have spiketails, and if so, where? I wanted to create a record of what was common or rare **here** - in Fairfax, Loudoun, Arlington and Prince William counties. After 10 years, and 300 surveys at 75 sites, I've only found Twin-spotteds in 2 streams, and am aware of fellow dragonfly hunters finding them at only 3 additional local sites. So clearly, they aren't common here, and suburban streams too degraded to support trout can still hold a few spiketails.

So, in our area they are uncommon to rare, and need small, perennial, forest streams with stable, relatively un-eroded banks and a noticeable, steady current. They don't need the cold, highly-oxygenated, rocky waters of a trout stream, but do need streams with halfway decent water quality and relatively low stormwater surges.



This Twin-spotted has greener eyes than the similar Brown Spiketail.

Look for this species in small, year-round streams at Huntley Meadows Park, Meadowwood Management Area, Riverbend Park and tributaries of the Popes Head Creek watershed. And remember, this is one of our *earliest* dragonflies. They start patrolling their forest streams as early as the 2nd week of April and are gone by mid-May. They make long, linear patrols, low over the water's surface, so pick a comfortable stream-side spot and keep your eyes focused on the middle of the stream. You may need to wait for 10 to 20 minutes before the resident male makes a pass. If you're lucky enough to catch a glimpse of this green-eyed, bright-spotted, ephemeral remnant of Northern Virginia's less developed past, you'll agree it's well worth the wait.