

Uhler's Sundragon



Uhler's Sundragon (*Helocordulia uhleri*) – 1.7" , 41-46 mm

Habitat Conservation Alert!

Flight Record:
(4/11-5/05)
Peaks
mid-late
April.

Rare

Habitat:
Clean, sandy
or gravelly
forest
streams w/
mix of riffles
& pools.

First Glance:
Small, dark.
Patrols low
over streams
or high over
forest
clearings.
Acrobatic
flight, often
hovers.

Compare:
Common
Baskettail
(Sely's
Sundragon
has not yet
been found
in N. Va.)



Juv M



Juv F

Row of small dark spots



Juv F

Eyes start gray then turn green w/ age.

Orange spot & white markings at base of wings are unique (Sely's Sundragon has no orange wing spot)

Notes from the field – Uhler's Sundragon:

This scarce and seldom seen member of the emerald family resembles the Common Baskettail, except for the orange and white wing marks. A habitat specialist with a brief and early flight period, I've only seen this species at two sites in Northern VA. Thankfully, both spots are protected, and appear to have breeding populations.

Uhler's need clean, small to medium, rocky forest streams with gravelly and/or sandy substrate, and a decent flow. They can be found in sunny clearings and forest edges near their streams. My first sighting was of a recently emerged juvenile (teneral) fluttering on its new, delicate wings through a hilly forest clearing, at Meadowood Special Recreation Management Area (Lorton, VA).

When on territory at their woodland streams, they patrol and hover over the water's surface, much like baskettails. My second, and best sighting, was in a sunny clearing on the edge of dry, forest hillside overlooking a picturesque rocky stream at Prince William Forest Park. Most of the hillside was covered with Mountain Laurel, but a small, open, level spot had 3 or 4 male Uhler's, hunting for gnats and engaging in aerial battles between gnatty mouthfuls. Their flight is erratic, impressively acrobatic and can be sustained for long periods with out perching.

The very similar Sely's Sundragon *lacks* orange wing spots, and has yet to be seen in Northern VA. It is however in range. Perhaps Meadowood and PWFPA are



good places to look. Other potential sites for both sundragons, might be the parks along the Occoquan River, such as Fountainhead Regional Park and Sandy Run Regional Park, as well as the extensive natural areas on Quantico Marine Corps Base.