

# Unicorn Clubtail



# Unicorn Clubtail (*Arigomphus villosipes*) – 2.2", 50-58 mm

**Flight Record:**  
(5/26-7/11)  
Peaks  
in June.

*Fairly  
Common*

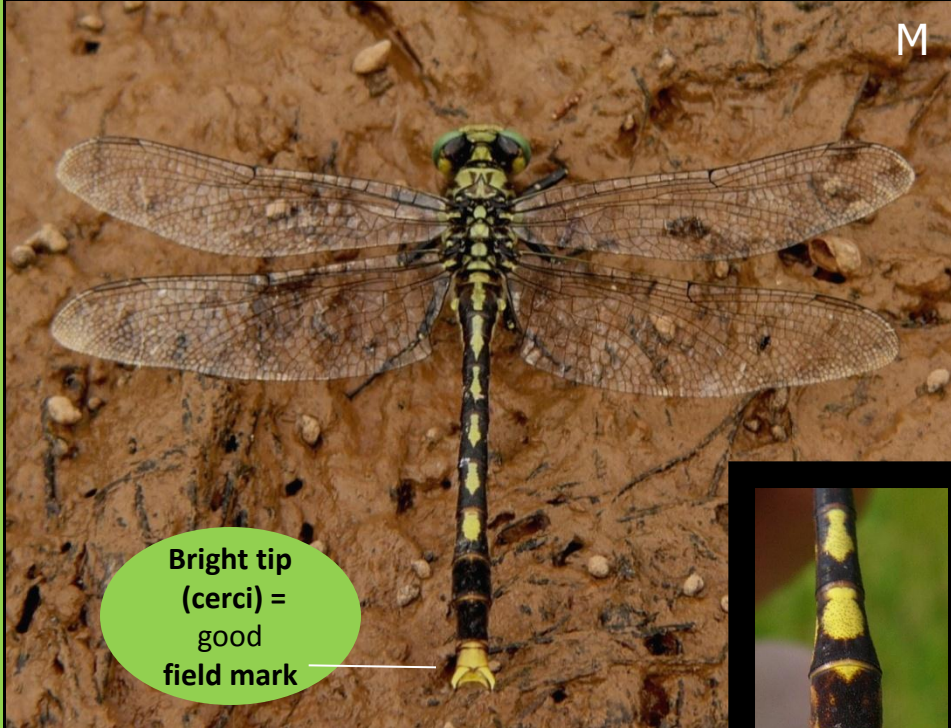
**Habitat:**  
Shallow,  
sunny ponds,  
pools &  
marshes w/  
open banks

**First Glance:**  
Medium, black  
and  
yellow/green.  
Bright tip &  
rusty-edged  
club.

Flies short,  
aggressive  
patrols along  
banks.

Perches often  
on open  
sandy/muddy  
banks or low  
stems/sticks.

**Compare:**  
Common  
Sanddragon



Bright tip  
(cerci) =  
good  
field mark



Rusty-  
edged  
club



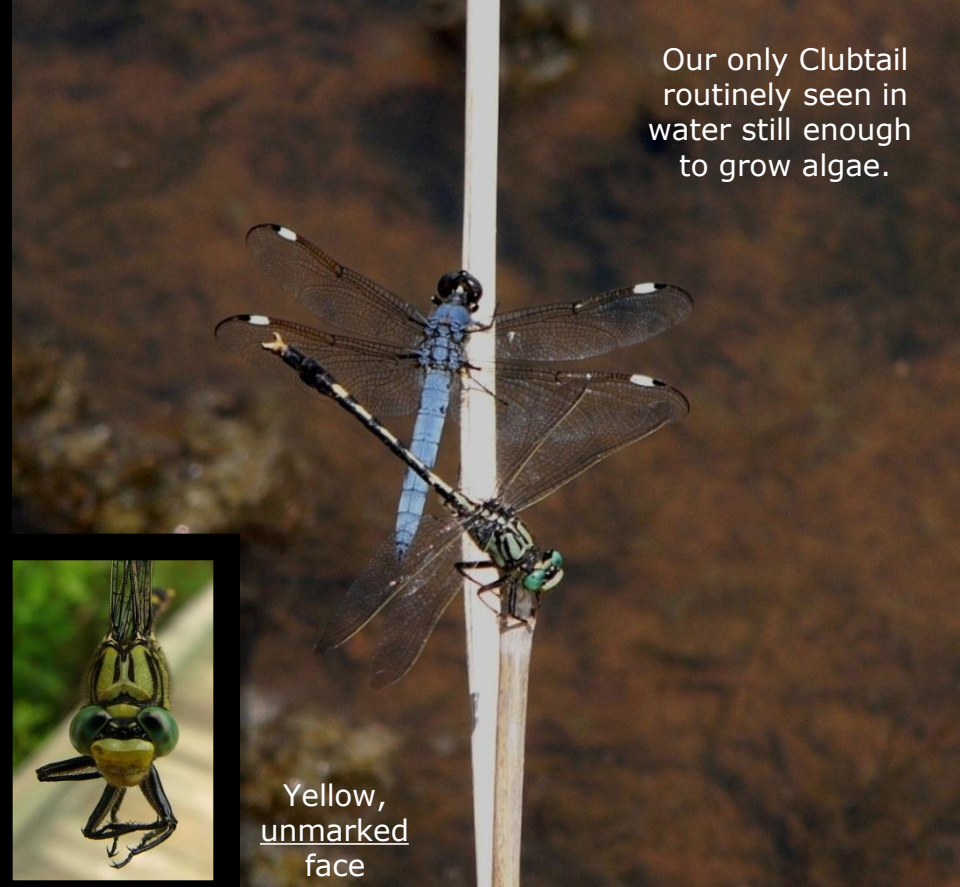
Eyes are gray-green  
to blue-green.



## Notes from the field – Unicorn Clubtail:

This is the only clubtail in Northern VA that prefers ponds and marshes, over streams and rivers. Lancet Clubtails may also visit stream-fed ponds, but Unicorns are our only clubtail that can be found in completely still, stagnant water. Look for them flying low, just above the water's surface, on short patrols that hug the shoreline. They like to perch flat on bare, unvegetated banks, so look for shallow ponds and large pools with areas of visible, bare soil along the shore. Typical storm-water detention ponds with thick stands of cattails crowding the edges are unlikely to have any Unicorns. Shallow, grass and sedge-filled ponds are more their ilk.

Those bright yellow cerci at the tip of their abdomen (used to clasp females during mating), make an excellent field mark. Coupled with their shoreline behavior, they're hard to miss when you're lucky enough to find one of their ponds, which isn't often. The specific habitat they need can be found in the ponds at Claude Moore Park, the large puddles along the dirt road that cuts through Accotink Bay Wildlife Refuge, and ponds at Occoquon Bay NWR. Sometimes you can also find them in the shallow, grassy, temporary, detention pools along roadways.



Our only Clubtail routinely seen in water still enough to grow algae.

Yellow,  
unmarked  
face

This Unicorn Clubtail shares a marshy perch with a bright blue Spangled Skimmer. Males of different species often tolerate each other's close presence, since they compete for different females.

Even perching on a vertical stem, Unicorns still hold a horizontal-like position, similar to their perching stance on the ground. There are seven families of dragonflies in the US. Each family, including clubtails, has a slightly different perching signature – learning to recognize these positions can be a great first step towards identification.