

Clamp-tipped Emerald



Clamp-tipped Emerald (*Somatochlora tenebrosa*) – 2.3", 48-64 mm

Habitat Conservation alert!

Flight Record:

(7/19-8/28)
Peaks early to mid Aug

Uncommon to Fairly Common

Habitat:
Small, shallow seepage forest streams

First Glance:
Medium.

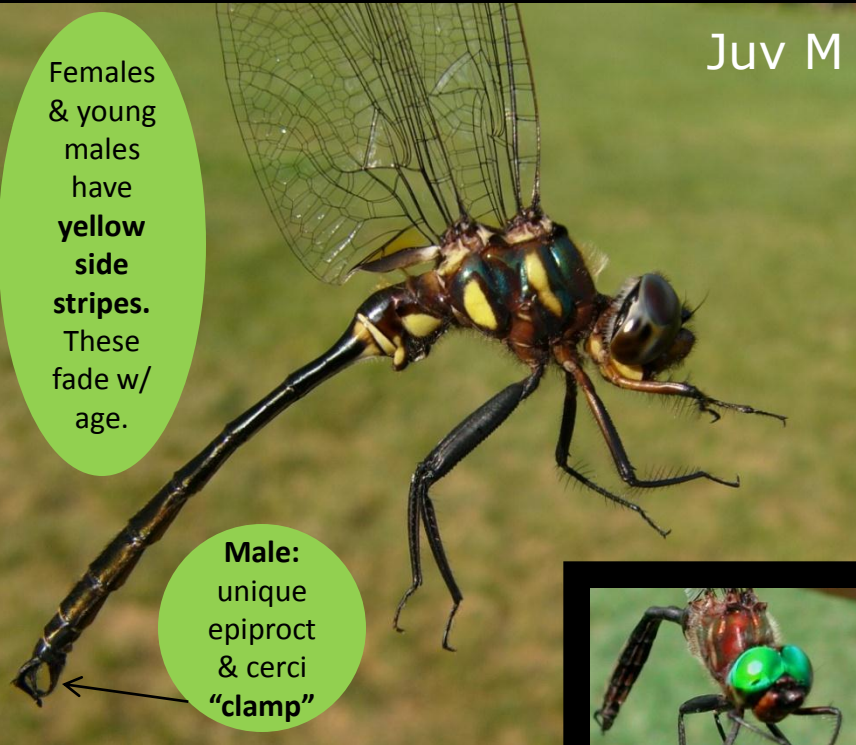
Dark, thin abdomen & square-ish middle.
Green eyes.
Clamp tip often visible in flight on males. Flies for hrs over fields.

Compare:
Emeralds:
Mocha,
Fine-lined

Females & young males have **yellow side stripes**. These fade w/ age.

Male:
unique epiproct & cerci "**clamp**"

Juv M



F



M



Mature males have **glowing green eyes** – female's turn bluish green

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Notes from the field – Clamp-tipped Emerald:

One look at a mature male's eyes and it's easy to see how the Emerald family got its name. The first Clamp-tipped Emerald I saw up close was caught by my younger brother, Keith, after his pretty spectacular high-speed chase around a local soccer field (center photo on previous page). I was already on my way to being under the dragonfly spell, but those iridescent, glowing green eyes certainly clinched it. Great catch Keith!

Clamp-tipped Emeralds set up territories and lay their eggs at woodland seeps and small swampy streams, but a sunny ball field is the easiest place to find them. Males and females love to hunt gnats and chase each other over sports fields during mid to late summer evenings. The peak seems to occur from late-July to late-August, from about 5PM-7PM. On several occasions I've been lucky enough to watch swarms of 20+ emeralds circling, high and low, over empty evening ball fields. My favorite however, was watching them zipping in and out of an intense Ultimate Frisbee game, the sprinting players unaware that *seven* species of dragonflies shared the field. Along with a swarm of Clamp-tipped and Mocha Emeralds, were Prince Baskettails, Twelve-spotted Skimmers, Spot-winged Gliders, Common Green Darners, and Black Saddlebags. The sunny, open environment of sports fields attracts gnats, provides lots of space for aerial maneuvers, and may also provide helpful updrafts of warm air. Whatever the



exact reasons may be, spending a few warm evenings at your local athletic field or golf course is a great way to see dragonflies in full winged display. Try the fields at Lake Fairfax Park and Occoquan Regional Park.

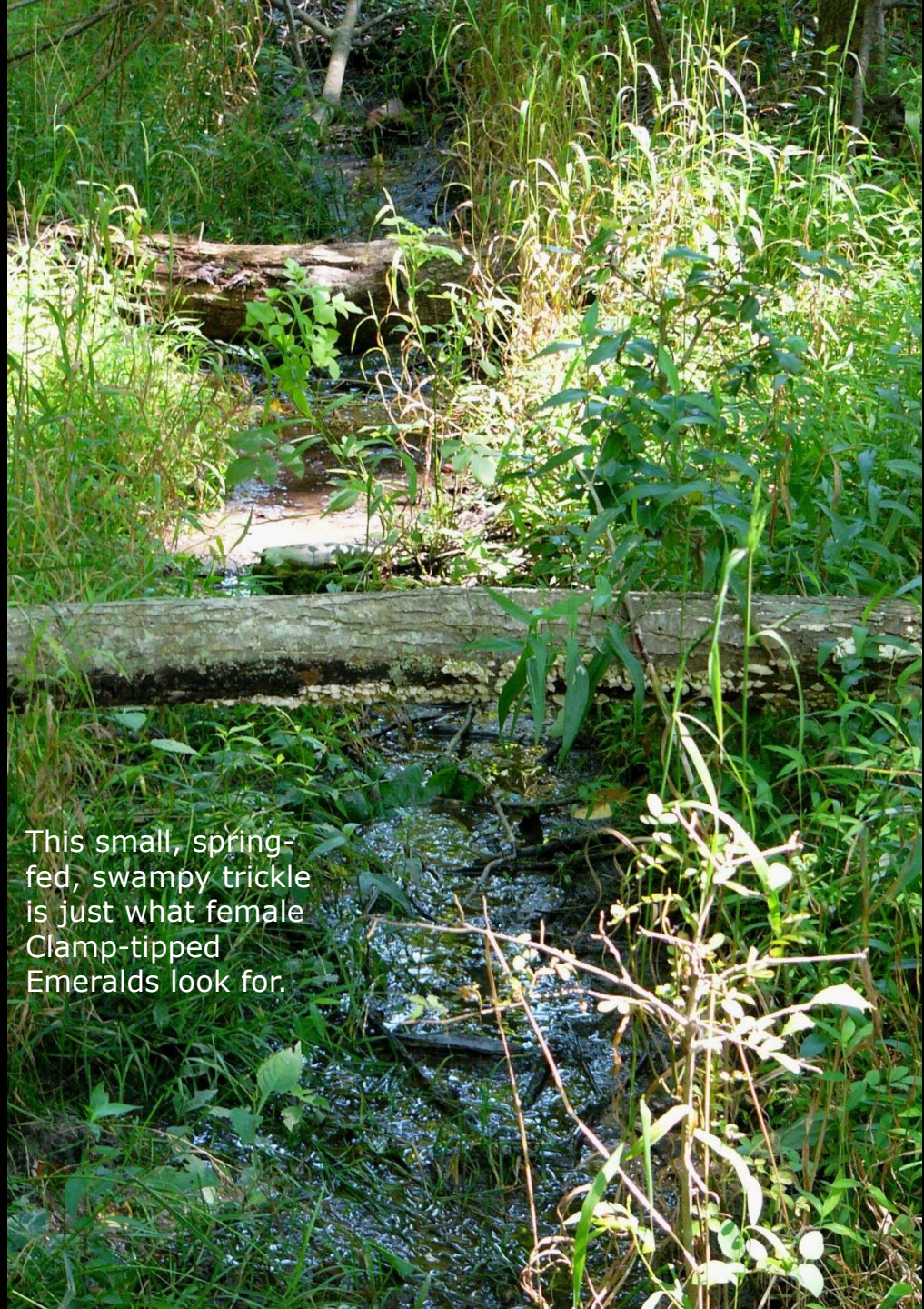
Clamp-tips are similar to Mocha Emeralds, but slightly less common in our area, and with a shorter flight period. Clamp-tips also prefer smaller, shallower water, looking for seep and spring-fed streams, while Mochas seem to prefer slightly larger streams.

Notes from the field – Clamp-tipped Emerald:

To tell the two apart in the field, try looking at the abdomen tip as they fly by. If it's a male Clamp-tipped, you may actually be able to see that cerci-epiproct clamp. Females are a lot tougher. Clamp-tips (male and female) have yellow thorax stripes, while Mochas never do, but that can be hard to see in flight. Mochas are larger, more darner-like in proportions, and often have a noticeable amber tint to their wings. Bring a pair of binos, sit back and enjoy the show - even if you can't tell which *Somatochlora* you're watching, it's still quite a sight.



A female oviposited here for several minutes.



This small, spring-fed, swampy trickle is just what female Clamp-tipped Emeralds look for.