

# Arrow Clubtail



# Arrow Clubtail (*Stylurus spiniceps*) – 2.5", 57-68 mm

## Habitat Conservation Alert!

**Flight Record:**  
(6/25-9/13)  
Peaks  
Aug-Sept

Rare

**Habitat:**  
Clean sections of piedmont rivers & wide creeks.

**First Glance:**  
Large, long and thin. Flies fast and low patrols over water surface, often down middle of river, w/ abdomen raised at slight angle.

**Compare:**  
River Cruisers, Black-Shouldered Spinyleg



Three stripes on thorax side - Cruisers have one

S-9 has no spot, and is longer than S-8



Uniquely shaped front thorax stripes



Dark face with one light stripe, & eyes don't touch



Club edges have large yellow & rust marks

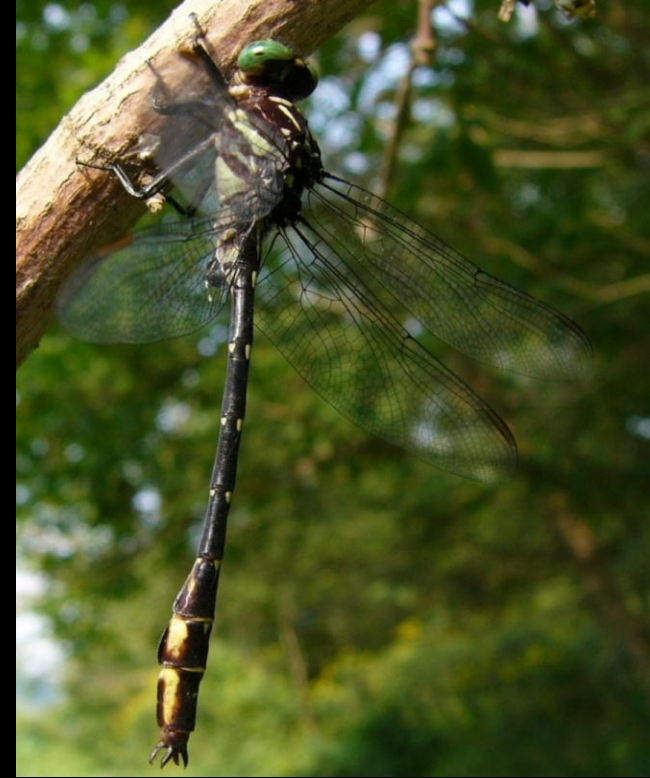
## Notes from the field – Arrow Clubtail:

This species is a member of the genus *Stylurus*, often called Hanging Clubtails. They spend much of their time in tree tops hanging from leaves or branch tips, hence the name.

When they're not in the tree canopy, hunting for leaf-eating insects or hiding from predators, you can see males making fast, low patrols over clean sections of the Potomac River. Although they're close in size, coloring and behavior to river cruisers, there are several ways to tell them apart. The first thing to do is watch a lot of river cruisers and get familiar with them, which isn't too hard since they're relatively common in our area. Then, if you're lucky enough to see the rare Arrow Clubtail, you'll notice the difference and say, "Wait a minute, THAT'S not a cruiser, something's different...". And you'll be right!

Here's what you'll notice: **1)** Arrow Clubtails fly just a few inches above the water, almost touching it, while cruisers usually fly a foot or more above. **2)** Arrow Clubtails have smaller territories, usually picking a 100 foot section of river and doing figure eights, while cruisers will claim several hundred yards of river, and fly long, straight patrols that may take over 10 minutes. **3)** Arrows often fly with their abdomens angled up at a slight tilt, while cruisers do not.

The females are much harder to find, and their abdominal markings and shape look quite different from males. The female I photographed (previous page) was a mystery to me, and it was *several years* before I realized what it was. Always save your mystery photos!



I once spent an afternoon searching for this species, fruitless after several hours. Finally, I saw two males chasing each other, up and down the river. Fast, and over deep water, they were unreachable. After an hour of balancing on boulders and running along the bank, I gave up and lay down on a rock. The two males, tangled in a heated battle, veered off course, *ran in to my rock*, and lay stunned at my side. I set one on a branch (above) and took a picture ☺