

Needham's Skimmer



Needham's Skimmer (*Libellula needhami*) – 2.2", 53-57 mm

Flight Record:
(6/01-9/26)
Peaks in
July-August.

*Fairly
Common*

Habitat:
Marshy
ponds, pools.

First Glance:
Large.
Orange-red
abdomen
(male),
yellow &
black
abdomen
(female).
Both have
orange-tinted
wings. Long,
low flights
over field
and water;
perches less
than other
Libellulas.

Compare:
Golden-
winged
Skimmer,
Yellow-sided
Skimmer
(female)



Reddish
face
(Golden-
wings
have an
orange
face)

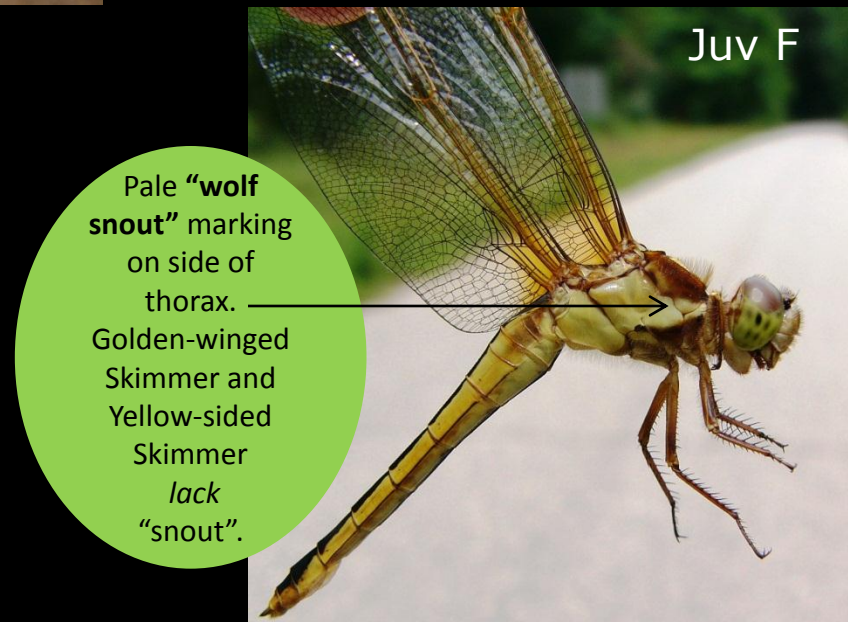


Hind leg's
2nd segment
(tibia) is **tan**,
w/ black
spines

Golden-
winged
Skimmers
have *black*
tibias

Female
& Juv
Male –
next
pages

Needham's Skimmer (*Libellula needhami*)



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Juv M



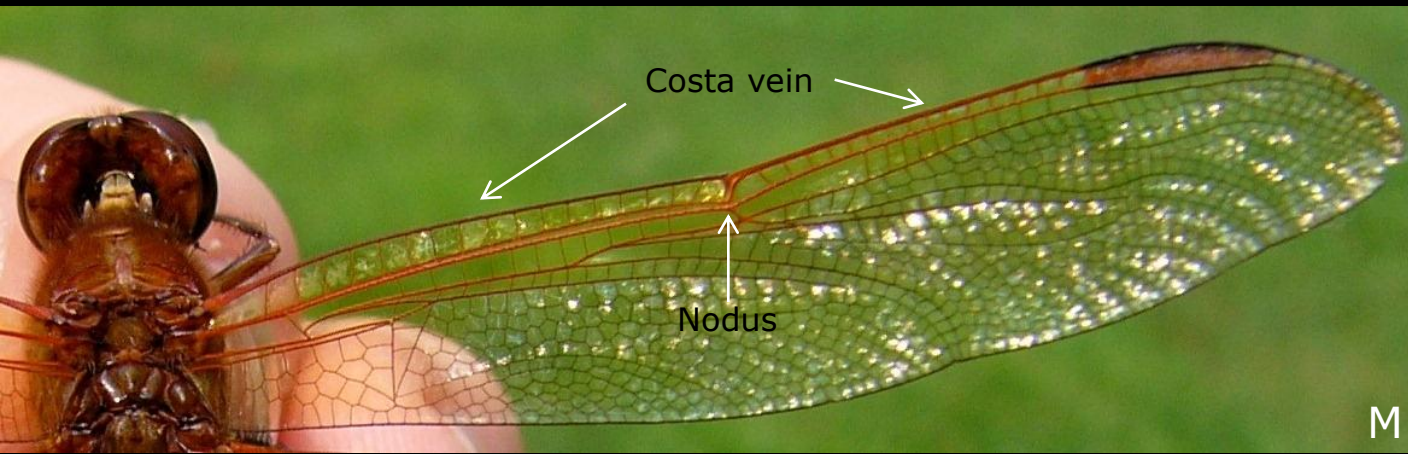
Juv M



Juv M

Pale "wolf snout" marking on side of thorax. Golden-winged and Yellow-sided lack "snout". This mark **fades in adults**, both male & female.

Needham's Skimmer (*Libellula needhami*)



On mature males, 1st half of Costa Vein (between Nodus and body) only **slightly darker** than 2nd half.

On young males, 1st half of Costa Vein is **noticeably darker** than 2nd half.



On females, (young and old), 1st half of Costa Vein is **black**, 2nd half yellow.

Notes from the field – Needham's Skimmer:

This dashing summer dragonfly, a member of the king skimmer genus, makes quite a splash at the shallow, marshy wetlands it prefers. Relatively skittish, it spends more time on the wing and less time perching than other king skimmers. Look for Needham's at thickly-vegetated marshes, grassy pools, shallow plant-filled ponds, and marshy ditches. I don't think I've ever seen one at a typical storm-water detention pond – they like wetlands with lots of plants, and water just a few inches deep.

The very similar (some would say almost identical) **Golden Winged Skimmer** (*Libellula auripennis*) has also been seen in Northern VA, although I haven't yet had the privilege. In Giff Beaton's field guide, "Dragonflies of Georgia", Mr. Beaton states that the only consistently reliable field mark to tell the two apart is the "wolf-snout" marking on the side of the thorax - Needham's have it, Golden-wings do not. In my experience the Needham's appears to be far more common in our area, and they probably account for more than 75% of the Needham's/ Golden-wings seen in Northern VA.

The wetland boardwalk at Huntley Meadows Park is probably the first place I saw a Needham's, and one of our area's easiest sites to see them. I've also seen dozens at a time, almost swarming, on the marshy bays and expansive lawns of Quantico Marine Corps Base.



Is this a Needham's or Golden-winged?

Hard to tell. Even from a distance the bright orange coloring narrows it down to those two species. However, to tell them apart, you'll need to pull out your binos and look for wolf-snouts, costa viens, tibiae and shades of face color – good luck! ☺

I have yet to find a Golden-winged Skimmer in Northern VA, but they have been documented in Fairfax County by several sources, including Odonatacentral.com, Huntley Meadows Park, and Jim Waggener's Audubon Society surveys. I haven't created a separate page for them yet, but I describe all their differences on the preceding Needham's ID pages.

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Meadowood Special Recreation Management Area, Bles Park and Huntley Meadows Park are all good sites to look for both species.