

## SHORTER CONTRIBUTIONS

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MARL PENNANT (*MACRODIPLAX BALTEATA*), A NEW COASTAL DRAGONFLY IN VIRGINIA -- The Marl Pennant (*Macrodiplax balteata*) is a southern dragonfly that ranges north to North Carolina, west to southern California, and south to Venezuela, as well as in the Bahamas, Cuba, Dominican Republic, and Jamaica (Dunkle, 1989). Habitat is typically mineralized waters and brackish permanent pools near beaches and salt marshes, and marl ponds further inland (Dunkle, 1989; Needham et al., 2000).

Like many other "pennants," the Marl Pennant typically hunts from perches at the tips of reeds, or twigs from near the ground to the treetops, and may occasionally feed in swarms. Females oviposit in tandem, laying eggs in open water or amongst surface weeds (Dunkle, 1989).

During a site visit to the popular Grandview Beach in Hampton, Virginia on 13 July 2006, I noticed a dragonfly that did not look familiar perching at the tips of grasses and twigs along an extensive patch of beachfront vegetation. I counted approximately 10-15 individuals, including both males and females. Without a net, I managed to bat one female out of the air with my hat, and collected the specimen for subsequent identification. Photographs were also taken (Fig. 1), and this species was later identified by Dr. Steve Roble as *Macrodiplax balteata*. This specimen represents the first known collection for Virginia.

Subsequent return visits (14 and 25 August 2006) to this southern portion of Grandview Beach, and another site just to the north, revealed additional sightings, and specimens collected (2 males, 3 females), suggesting that there is an established population using the entire length of Grandview Beach. These specimens will be housed in the collections of the Virginia Division of Natural Heritage, the U.S. National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., and the Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville, Virginia.

Habitat at the Grandview Beach site is similar to that described above, and includes salt marsh, open beach fringed with marsh grasses, reeds, and shrubs, and brackish pools.

Other species of Odonata noted during these surveys included *Anax junius*, *Brachymesia gravida*, *Erythemis simplicicollis*, *Erythrodiplax berenice*, *Ischnura ramburii*, *Libellula needhami*, *Pachydiplax longipennis*, *Pantala flavescens*, *Tramea carolina*, and *Tramea lacerata*.



Fig. 1. Subadult male *Macrodiplax balteata* from Grandview Beach, City of Hampton, Virginia (photo by Irvine Wilson).

It is unlikely that the Marl Pennant is restricted to Grandview Beach. Its preferred habitat is common in coastal Virginia, and additional surveys are needed to determine the status and distribution of this dragonfly in the Commonwealth.

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## LITERATURE CITED

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