

Native Plants and Butterflies

EASTERN TIGER SWALLOWTAIL (*Papilio glaucus*)

by Eve Hannahs

The showy Eastern Tiger Swallowtail is a Florida garden favorite. The large butterfly (4.0" to 6.5") has bright yellow wings with black markings. Irridescent blue and red markings are found on the hind wings. A strong flyer, it can be found great distances from its breeding grounds, visiting along roadsides and in gardens, even in large cities.

Eastern Tigers are found from Canada through Florida east of the Rockies. The far northern specimens are much smaller and paler, the size and depth of color increasing as the populations become more southern. Early Eastern broods resemble more northern specimens, but they, too, increase in size and coloration as the season progresses. The largest and most brilliant specimens are classified as a variety *Australis*, and are found in Georgia, Florida, and the Gulf states.

A darker phase in the female, when ground color is brown, is said to be a form of protection, as they resemble the ill-tasting Pipevine Swallowtail. Georgia is reported to be the southern limit of the darker phase.

Larval foods are a variety of woodland trees: cherry, *Prunus*; tulip tree, *Liriodendrum*; basswood, *Tilia*; and others. As the habitat of these trees is often rich woods and water courses, large populations of butterflies can be found in the area. The immature stages are often found high in the trees. The smooth green caterpillar has a large head with an orange and black collar, also fake

eyes of yellowish-orange with black pupils. As in all swallowtails, there are retractable scent glands (osmateria) behind the ear that arise when the caterpillar is disturbed.

The light brown pupal case resembles a curled, dried leaf, attached at the bottom with silk and held in an upright position at the top by a silken girdle.

Florida has nine swallowtail species: pipevine, black or parsley, giant, spicebush, palamedes, zebra, tiger, polydamus (without tails), and the threatened Shaus' of the Keys. As

of October 16, 1984, the Shaus' Swallowtail has been reclassified by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission from threatened to endangered. The Bahamian Swallowtail, essentially endemic to the Bahamas, is considered a casual visitor to Florida.

Although the Tiger is heavily addicted to nectaring on roadside and garden plants, it is often found "puddling" and is attracted to urine, manure, carrion, and — despite the Surgeon General's warning — cigarette smoke!



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