

## EASTERN TIGER SWALLOWTAIL (*Papilio glaucus*)

The Eastern Tiger Swallowtail is one of ten species of swallowtail butterflies found in Florida. It's indigenous to the eastern United States and widely distributed from New England west through the Great Lakes area and most of the Great Plains states and from southern Ontario south to the Gulf Coast and northern Mexico. It enjoys a varied habitat, including woodlands, rivers, creeks, fields, gardens, roadsides, urban parks, and city yards. Adult Tiger Swallowtails eat the nectar of flowers from a variety of plants, including penta, verbena, butterfly bush, milkweed, honeysuckle, phlox, coneflower, lilac, ironwood, and wild cherry. They especially like pink or purple nectar producing plants. They also like any member of the carrot family - dill, fennel, parsley, lovage, and carrots.

Eastern Tiger Swallowtails have an average wingspan of 3.1 to 5.5 inches. Males are always yellow with four prominent black tiger stripes on their upper wings (1) while females can be a duller yellow with black tiger stripes and a splash of iridescent blue on their lower wings (2) or they can have dimorphic coloration (3) and mimic the distasteful pipevine swallowtail (4), giving them a higher level of protection



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (male) *Papilio glaucus*

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Dorsal (Upper) side of a female Eastern Tiger Swallowtail

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from predators such as hornets, hawks, flycatchers, woodpeckers, blackbirds, owls, squirrels, raccoons, and possums.

This dark morph is black with a darker shadow of tiger stripes on its upper wings and a splash of iridescent blue on its lower wings. The dark morph is far more prevalent in the southern regions where it co-exists with pipevine swallowtails.

*Male tiger swallowtails prefer the yellow females!*

The lifespan of adult tiger swallowtails is about 2 weeks. Males fly around patrolling areas with lots of nectar, hoping to attract female tiger swallowtails. Tiger Swallowtails may mate with several different partners during their life cycle. In the northern parts of their range, females produce two broods but in Florida they produce at least three and possibly four broods during their life. Females deposit one green egg per leaf on the leaves of tulip, wild cherry, sweet-bay magnolia, basswood, and ash trees. In our area, the magnolia is the host tree of choice. The egg stage lasts 4 - 10 days, depending on temperature. The larval stage is 3 - 4 weeks. During the larval stage the caterpillars go through five developmental stages called instars. They grow from tiny dark brown larva to bright green caterpillars with orange rimmed blue false eyes. (5) Their false eyes are meant to fool predators into thinking they are snakes! During the final install they darken to brown again before forming their chrysalis. The chrysalis (pupal) stage is 10 - 20 days, except for overwintering. Eastern Tiger Swallowtails do not migrate. They spend the winter in the chrysalis stage. Longer nights and cooler temperatures trigger the caterpillars to become chrysalis and wait until spring to emerge. Generally, butterflies won't fly when the temperature is below 55 degrees. In our area of Florida, adult tiger swallowtails begin to emerge in late February or early March.



The dark morph of the female Eastern tiger Swallowtail

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Pipevine Swallowtail

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Caterpillar of the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail

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*Submitted by Mary Jo Davis, Chair of the Birds, Butterflies, Bats and Bees Committee.*