

Profile

Palamedes Swallowtail

Papilio palamedes

The Palamedes Swallowtail is a large, dark swallowtail marked with yellow spots and bands. It is particularly common in and near swampy woods and is the most common of the swallowtails seen from the boardwalk.

The wingspread range is from a little less than 2 inches to almost 3 inches. The upper surface of the wings is black with yellow markings. The hind wing has a row of yellow spots at the edge and a yellow band across just inside the yellow spots.

Males tend to be smaller than females and have a rich black background coloration. Female coloration appears to be more of a soft chocolate brown.

When feeding or at rest with its wings up, it is easy to differentiate from other swallowtails

because its thorax and abdomen have yellow stripes that run horizontally, *near right*, while other dark swallowtails have spotted bodies, *far right*.

Palamedes Swallowtails are found in swamps and wet woodlands throughout Florida wherever its larval host plants, Red Bay and Swamp Bay, grow.

Males patrol wooded areas in search of females. Palamedes courtship involves the female flying one to two feet above the ground and the male flying one to feet above the female. Numerous generations are produced in Florida from March through December.

Females deposit their small, pale



female Palamedes Swallowtail



larva ©Dave Wagner



pupa ©Jerry Butler



Palamedes Swallowtail



Black Swallowtail

yellow-green eggs singly on the undersides of host plant leaves where the larvae eat the foliage. Like many swallowtail larvae, the young caterpillars are brownish-black with a white saddle and

hind quarters. This color pattern resembles a bird dropping and helps protect the young larvae from being eaten.

The mature caterpillar is green on top with numerous small blue dots and pinkish-brown on the underside. A small yellow lateral line separates the top and underside colors.

Most noticeably, the thorax is enlarged and has two colorful false eyespots that make the caterpillar look as though it has the head of a snake or lizard. The spots are tan with a large black center and a white “false reflection” above. A full grown larva will be about 2.5 inches in length.

When the larvae are ready to pupate, they spin a silk mat on a leaf which then contracts and forces the leaf to curl upward. They rest on the

silk mat.

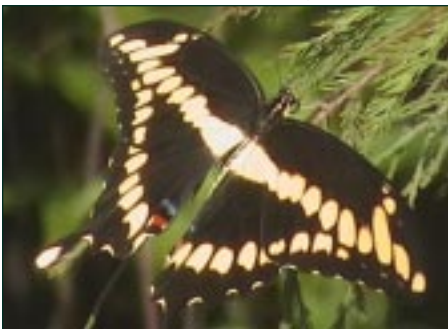
The pupa, or chrysalis, may be either green or pinkish-brown and is attached to a branch by a silken pad at the base and a silken girdle around the middle. Pupae have two short “horns.”

Adults feed on nectar from a variety of flowers but seem to have a particular fondness for thistles. Pickerelweed is another favorite nectar source. Palamedes continuously flutter their wings while they are feeding.

Adults also sip water and get minerals at mud and scat, and they are reported to roost communally in oaks and cabbage palm trees.

Similar species: Giant Swallowtail

Broad yellow band across forewings; body and undersides of wings are yellow



Similar species: Black Swallowtail

Bright royal blue on hindwings; spots on body rather than stripes



Similar species: Spicebush Swallowtail

Pale azure blue on hindwings; spots on body rather than stripes

