

# Giant Swallowtail



*Heraclides cresphontes*



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## Biology

The **Giant Swallowtail** is a large and common butterfly that is distributed from Canada to Panama. This butterfly is attracted to plants in butterfly gardens, and can be frequently found feeding on thistles in pastures and on roadsides. Females are commonly observed around citrus trees, where they lay cream-orange eggs on new growth. Young larvae feed on the new growth and rest on the upper surface of the leaves, whereas mature larvae rest on the branches. Larvae of all stages resembles bird droppings, which helps them to escape predation. Cryptically-colored pupae can be found on the vertical twigs of the host plant. Adult **Giant Swallowtails** undergo at least three reproductive cycles per year. In the Florida Keys, there are two similar species that fly together with the **Giant Swallowtail**: the federally endangered Schaus' Swallowtail (*Heraclides aristodemus ponceanus*) and the Bahamian Swallowtail (*Heraclides andraemon*). In Mexico and the Neotropics, there are a number of other similar species, such as the Thoas Swallowtail (*Heraclides thoas*).



## Host Plants

Sour Orange  
*Citrus x aurantium*

Toothache Tree  
*Zanthoxylum clava-herculis*

**Fun fact:**  
Giant Swallowtail larvae, like all other swallowtails, display their osmeteria when disturbed. These are fleshy glandular projections (→) that emit a nasty odor, repellant to predators.



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