

Palamedes Swallowtail

Palamedes Swallowtails occur in the southern half of the state, primarily in the Coastal Plain. They are multi-brooded, flying spring, summer, and fall. These large, graceful butterflies are found in swamps or other wetlands as well as woodlands that support redbays, their primary larval hosts. In these habitats, they can be common. Palamedes seem to fly with slower wing beats than other swallowtails. Both sexes nectar at a variety of flowers; males are frequent participants at puddle clubs.



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- The sexes are not discernably different in appearance. Females are slightly larger and more reclusive than males. First generation (spring) individuals tend to be smaller than those of subsequent broods.
- Basic wing color is black-brown on dorsal and ventral surfaces. With age and wear, the wings lose scales and appear browner.
- The yellow spot-bands on dorsal and ventral hindwings create a yellow flash that is visible in flight. This helps to distinguish Palamedes from Giant Swallowtails.
- The thin, yellow/orange line that runs parallel to the body on the ventral hindwing is diagnostic. No other Alabama swallowtail has this marking.
- Forewings are very rounded, causing wing tips to point downward when perched.
- Tails are often twisted, making the yellow centers difficult to see.
- May be confused with Giant Swallowtail.



Palamedes Swallowtail

Papilio palamedes

Dorsal View



Pale yellow bars

Black-brown upper surface

Submarginal row of yellow spots

Inner row of yellow spots becomes a broad, yellow band on hindwings*

Entire tail is filled with yellow that is bisected by thin dark vein

Palamedes Swallowtail *Papilio palamedes*

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* *Reliable diagnostic markers*

Wingspan: 3 ⅞ to 5 ½ inches (7.9-14 cm)



Palamedes Swallowtail

Papilio palamedes

Ventral View

Narrow yellow line near wing base runs parallel to the abdomen*

Body striped

Band of blue scaling

Median and submarginal rows of yellow-orange spots

Palamedes Swallowtail *Papilio palamedes*

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Similar Species

Palamedes Swallowtail



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Giant Swallowtail



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