

SPICEBUSH SWALLOWTAIL

(Papilio troilus)

Bug of the Month



The Spicebush Swallowtail is a common butterfly across the eastern United States. They can be found near wood areas, swamps, stream banks, and residential gardens. They are often confused with Black swallowtails. One easy way to differentiate between the two is to pay attention to the hind wings' coloration. Spicebush swallowtails have a bluish-filled section that is missing an orange spot. In contrast, Black swallowtails

have a continuous row of orange spots.

Caterpillars of this species initially imitate bird-droppings when they first hatch. As they develop, they transform into a larger bright green caterpillar with enormous false eyespots. During the day, caterpillars attach threads of silk to the midvein of leaves. As the silk dries, it pulls the leaf around the caterpillar, hiding it from

predators. Once nightfall hits, the caterpillars emerge to feed on host plants. Common host plants include spicebush, sassafras, and red bay.

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