

ORCHARD SWALLOWTAIL

APILIO AEGEUS

Orchard swallowtails are a large predominantly black butterfly with wingspans of 12-14cm, The females are usually a little larger.

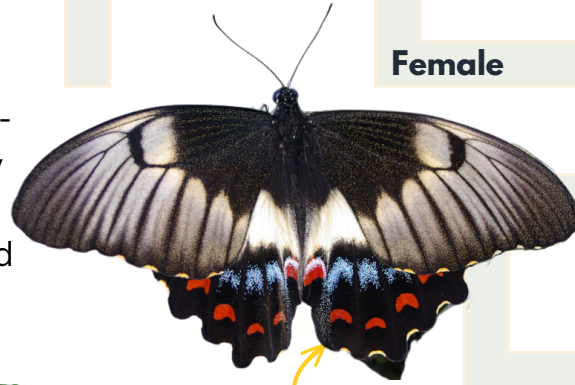
They are sometimes also called Lemon Orchards, or Large Citrus Butterfly.



Diet

The caterpillar eats the leaves of citrus trees and natives species from the family Rutaceae. They prefer young leaves to old leaves.

The adults feed on nectar from flowers and are less picky with their food species than the caterpillar is.



Female

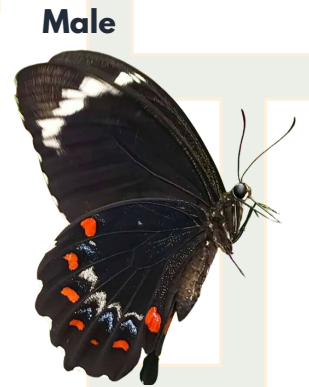


Female

The females have series of blue and red crescent-shaped markings on their hind wings



Male



Male

The males are black with an arc of creamy-white spots near the tip of each forewing. Each hindwing has a creamy-white patch and a single red spot.

Fun Fact!

The males are very territorial and will chase away anything black and white that enters their territory, even magpies!

Distribution

Orchard Swallowtails are most common in Queensland but can be along the East Coast of Australia and into South Australia. Tasmania is too cold for them. They prefer humid tropical and subtropical environments.



Adaptations

If disturbed, a caterpillar will reveal a red-orange "tentacle" (known as the osmeterium) from behind its head which emits a foul smell to deter predators

Young caterpillars look like fresh bird dropping, this helps deter predators from eating them!

Predators

Spiders and insectivorous birds like magpies and butcher birds

Fun Fact!

This species is presumably named after the great King Aegeus in Ancient Greek mythology.

Ideal conditions

These butterflies do best in 25-30° and humidity of 70-90%

Pest

In some areas they are considered a pest because the caterpillars eat their way through citrus plantations.

