

SCHAUS' SWALLOWTAIL

Heraclides ponceana ponceana

Order: Lepidoptera
Family: Papilionidae
FNAI Ranks: GNRT1?/S1?
U.S. Status: Endangered
FL Status: Endangered



Description: A large (forewing measuring 1.6 - 2.3 in. = 40 - 58 mm), brown-black butterfly with yellow markings. Markings across the center of the forewing and hindwing appear as a pale yellow band that bifurcates toward the tip of the forewing. Markings along the trailing edge of both the forewing and hindwing appear as a series of crescents, with those on the hind wing larger and generally a deeper yellow. Underside of the hind wing has a large burnt orange patch. Tails are black, trimmed with yellow. Males can be identified by having yellow-tipped antennae. Larvae have cream to yellow patches over a brown background, rows of small blue spots on the sides, and a white patch on the posterior end. The osmeterium, a defense organ on the prothoracic region of caterpillars that can superficially resemble antennae, is white.

Similar Species: The giant swallowtail (*Papilio cresphontes*) and Bahama swallowtail (*Papilio andaemon bonhotei*) have a central yellow spot on the tail tips.

Habitat: Rockland (=tropical hardwood) hammocks. Host plants are torchwood (*Amyris elemifera*) and, less commonly, wild lime (*Zanthoxylum fagara*).

Seasonal Occurrence: Adults emerge in early summer as the rainy season begins. Most common mid-May to mid-June. Researchers have verified a second flight takes place from August - September (Jaret C. Daniels, pers. comm.). Adult lifespan is generally 3 weeks.

Florida Distribution: Currently restricted to rockland (tropical hardwood) hammocks on North Key Largo and islands within Biscayne Bay. Historically, was found from Miami south to Lower Matecumbe Key (Loftus and Kushlan 1982, USFWS 1982).

Range-wide Distribution: Currently restricted to rockland (tropical hardwood) hammocks on North Key Largo and islands within Biscayne Bay. Historically, was found from Miami south to Lower Matecumbe Key (Loftus and Kushlan 1982, USFWS 1982). Some authors consider the subspecies *P. a. driophilus* to be synonymous with *P. a. ponceanus* (Simon and Miller 1986, Tyler 1994, Pelham 2008). This would extend the range to North Andros Island, South Andros Island, and Cat Island of the Bahamas.

Conservation Status: Federally endangered. Schaus' swallowtail was one of the first two invertebrates to become federally listed species. Protected within Biscayne National Park, Crocodile Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park, and John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park.

Protection and Management: Plant torchwood and wild lime in restoration areas. Continue reintroduction efforts to support populations. Allow for minor disturbances at hammock edges to promote growth of plants used for nectar. Remove invasive plants.

References: Deyrup and Franz 1994, Emmel and Minno 1988, Loftus and Kushlan 1982, Pelham 2008, Simon and Miller 1986, Tyler 1984, USFWS 1982.



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