

The black swallowtail may be Oklahoma's state butterfly but the eastern tiger is a crowd favorite. The tiger might actually hold a record as a designated state symbol with "state butterfly" standing in Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, and South Carolina and as "state insect" in Virginia. It is arguably the best recognized swallowtail, with a habitat range from Mexico and some Great Plains states to just about anywhere east of the Mississippi. Male Eastern tiger Swallowtails are always yellow, but females might be yellow or black. Females have a splash of iridescent blue wash on their tails, while males do not, according to field guides. Tigers have plenty of swallow-tail family company in Oklahoma, with the giant, black, pipevine, and spicebush among them. Nearly identical Western swallowtails inhabit areas north and west into British Columbia and the Canadian swallowtail ranges across that country and as far north as Fairbanks, Alaska. Among the largest of butterflies, a resting tiger swallowtail with wings spread can measure up to 5½ inches across, according to several field guides. By comparison a monarch butterfly is typically 3½ inches across. Giant swallowtails can be 6½ inches, however. It's a butterfly often seen in the treetops, as the females lay their large green eggs on plants in the Magnolia and rose families, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's fact sheet on these large show-stoppers. Common host plants include tulip tree, wild black cherry, and Magnolia. The western and northern tigers trend toward cottonwoods and aspens. All butterflies need nectar, water and minerals, however, so flower gardens can be a draw, as well as water features and even mud puddles. Kelly Bostian 918-581-8357 [kelly.bostian@tulsaworld.com](mailto:kelly.bostian@tulsaworld.com) Twitter: @KellyBo