



THE ZSL WILD SCIENCE PODCAST: SHOW NOTES

Episode: ZSL #052 – World Swallowtail Day 2026: Celebrating and Saving Iconic Butterflies

Happy World Swallowtail Day to listeners of Wild Science! To mark this special day and celebrate these incredible insects, we catch up with Sophie Ledger, Red List Research Associate and Manager at ZSL's Institute of Zoology, and Dr Mark Collins, President of the Swallowtail and Birdwing Butterfly Trust, to explore the ecology, adaptations and challenges of this remarkable family of butterflies, and hear about the work being done to protect and conserve them. Whether you're a lifelong lepidopterist, or simply enjoy watching a butterfly in flight, we hope you enjoy this episode.

Overview

- 00:11** [Harriet McAra](#), Host of Wild Science, Episode introduction
- 01:19** [Sophie Ledger](#), Red List Research Associate and Manager at ZSL's Institute of Zoology, gives an overview of the swallowtail butterfly family, the threats they currently face, and the wonderful (and sometimes weird) adaptations they have evolved to increase their chances of survival
- 13:29** Sophie and Harriet discuss the work of the IUCN Butterfly and Moth Specialist Group and what comes next for swallowtail populations
- 22:44** Dr Mark Collins, President of the Swallowtail and Birdwing Butterfly Trust, discusses the work of the Trust both further afield in Malaysia and Bhutan, and closer to home in Norfolk, UK
- 38:05** Thank you and outro

Resources

- If there's a topic you'd like to hear on a future podcast, or if you'd like to share your thoughts, email the ZSL Wild Science Podcast at: wild.science@zsl.org
- Check out our science and conservation work at: www.zsl.org/Science or www.zsl.org/conservation
- Sophie Ledger: <https://www.zsl.org/about-zsl/our-people/sophie-ledger>
- Collins, N. M., & Morris, M. G. (1985). Threatened swallowtail butterflies of the world: the IUCN Red Data Book. IUCN. Available for download from: <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/6844>
- IUCN SSC Butterfly and Moth Specialist Group: <https://iucn.org/our-union/commissions/group/iucn-ssc-butterfly-and-moth-specialist-group>
- IUCN Red List of Threatened Species assessment overview <https://www.iucnredlist.org/assessment/process>
- Genital photoreceptors have crucial role in oviposition for females and copulation for males (sees with its genitals). References:
 - Kentaro Arikawa, Hindsight of Butterflies: The Papilio butterfly has light sensitivity in the genitalia, which appears to be crucial for reproductive behavior, *BioScience*, Volume 51, Issue 3, March 2001, Pages 219–225, [https://doi.org/10.1641/0006-3568\(2001\)051\[0219:HOB\]2.0.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.1641/0006-3568(2001)051[0219:HOB]2.0.CO;2)
 - Kentaro Arikawa, Nobuhiro Takagi "Genital Photoreceptors Have Crucial Role in Oviposition in Japanese Yellow Swallowtail Butterfly, *Papilio xuthus*," *Zoological Science*, 18(2), 175-179, (1 March 2001)
- Swallowtail and Birdwing Butterfly Trust: <https://www.sbbt.org.uk/>
- Saving Swallowtails Conference: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLbsU_zSUBrn7qcbUIxv1vONuqzcOhnHO-&si=mBA8eg-8cwmSu1pS

Get in touch

- Email wild.science@zsl.org with your questions, comments, and thoughts for future episodes!
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