



## Wildlife Window: Anole Lizards

### These Backyard Competitors Eat Pesky Mosquitoes

By the Rivendell Ponds & Preserves Committee

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**A war is raging – right in your backyard!** Two related lizard species are competing for shelter and food – it's the **Green** versus the **Brown Anole Lizards** (pronounced "uh-noles"). Florida's native green anoles (*Anolis carolinensis*) had serious competition when the invasive Cuban Brown Anoles (*Anolis sagrei*) were introduced over a century ago. Native to Cuba, these invasive lizards are now the most common lizard in many urbanized parts of Florida. The Cuban browns outcompete and displace native species, particularly the green anole – pushing them to the tops of trees.

#### Appearance:

The **green anole** is found in natural and suburban habitats throughout the state. These lizards are great climbers, which help them adapt and escape capture from the brown anoles. Adult green anoles grow 5 to 8 inches long and males have a solid pink dewlap, or throat fan. Green anoles can change color from bright green to dull brown.

Adult **brown anoles** are also 5 to 8 inches long and various shades of brown with flecks of greys and browns. Their dewlap is orange, with a white/yellow border. Unlike the green anoles, the browns cannot change color. Besides the color difference, brown anoles are distinguishable by their shorter snouts. Their dewlaps are used to defend territory, plus their bobbing motion can intimidate smaller males, as well as attract a mate.



(Photos by Bob Frank.)

**Feeding & Habitat:** Both species are beneficial garden predators – they help moderate populations of mosquitoes, beetles, flies, spiders, roaches, and other small invertebrates. Brown anoles are more common to see around your yard and crawling on buildings and screens, while green anoles tend to live on trunks and limbs of trees, and often move to the crown of the trees to escape the invasive brown anoles.



**Fun Fact:** While many people call the green anole lizards "chameleons" because they can quickly change color from bright green to dull brown, green anoles are not true chameleons, which are native to Africa and Madagascar.

**Protect their Habitats.** Let's keep our ponds and preserves healthy and attractive for these mosquito-eating lizards and all wildlife friends. We can enjoy them, enhance our quality of life, and keep our property values strong. We remind you to view the amazing P&P Wildlife Photo Gallery. (Visit: [rivendellcommunity.com/ponds](http://rivendellcommunity.com/ponds) & scroll down to the Gallery.)