

# WILDLIFE

## It's Not a Gecko

Some people find them startling; some find them cute. They run in front of you when you're walking, they magically appear in your lanai, and if you're really unlucky you find them shriveled in your garage. So, what are they?

One of those non-native species (Florida is said to be the epicenter of for those), the brown anole (pronounced uh-NOLE) is also known as the Cuban brown anole. The small lizard (typically 5-9 inches long) arrived in Key West by accident in a shipment of cargo from Cuba in the 1800s and is now the most commonly encountered lizard in most of Florida.

While usually brown (imagine that), they can vary their shade by lightening or darkening their skin, and colors range from brown to gray to black, and some are even red or have a reddish head. They often have intricate patterns on their back and sides; females almost always have a light-colored stripe running down the middle of their back. Males have a bright, reddish-orange throat fan (i.e., dewlap), which they extend to signal their presence.



Brown anoles are normally active during the day and prefer open, sunny areas. However, some are active at night, feeding on insects attracted to lights. They sleep stretched out on limbs of small trees and shrubs. They also shelter in confined

places like gaps behind storm shutters (startling many a homeowner when closing or opening them).

Besides insects, brown anoles feed on other invertebrates, vegetation, and other small lizards. Their predators include larger lizards, outdoor cats, snakes, and birds. Wild brown anoles normally live less than two years and are sexually active their second year.



You'll be happy to know there's no known direct hazards to people, but if captured (good luck with that) they can be handled without risk of injury to the captor, although they may deliver a noticeable bite. If handled, please be sure to wash your hands as brown anoles are known to carry the salmonella bacteria on their skin. FMI:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/116461-Anolis-sagrei>