

Anolis planiceps (Leaf Anole)

Family: Polychrotidae (Anoles and Tree Lizards)

Order: Squamata (Lizards and Snakes)

Class: Reptilia (Reptiles)



Fig. 1. Leaf anole, *Anolis planiceps*.

[<http://www.trinidad-tobagoherps.org/Images/planiceps.jpg>, downloaded 24 October 2016]

TRAITS. Formerly known as *Anolis chrysolepis* or *Norops chrysolepis*, the leaf anole measures up to 76mm from snout to vent according (D'Angiolella et al., 2011). The pads of their feet are specialised to help them rest on leaves and trunks (Fig. 1). They have a spotted red patch of skin below their jaws, which is extendable, called the dewlap (Fig. 2). The region along the lizard's spine has larger scales than the adjacent areas with those located in the mid-dorsal area being the largest. Along their heads are two prominent ridges as well as ridged (keeled) scales located above the eyes (Fig. 3). The dorsal scales of the leaf anole are several shades of brown while the ventral scales are a pale cream colour; patterns vary greatly within populations (Fig. 4) (Vanzolini and Williams, 1970). Male anoles have longer tails and the females have wider bodies and smaller dewlaps than males (Vitt and Zani, 2011).

DISTRIBUTION. Leaf anoles may be found in a relatively wide range from east Venezuela to Guyana, Suriname, Columbia, Trinidad and Brazil (Fig. 5). They are found throughout the island of Trinidad primarily in terrestrial, highly forested areas (D'Angiolella et al, 2011).

HABITAT AND ECOLOGY. These anoles can be found living in shady forests with dense overhead tree cover and thick undergrowth. They are an arboreal species (primarily) in addition to being insectivorous, diurnal predators. They have been observed resting on leaves in trees (Fig. 1) as well as on the trunk of these trees, these are said to be their microhabitats (Ribeiro-Júnior, 2015). They forage through leaf litter for insects such as ants, caterpillars, spiders and cockroaches and use the surroundings to camouflage themselves from predators (Vitt and Zani, 1996). Leaf anoles are also less active in the afternoon to evening period when temperatures are highest and they also have lower body temperatures than most other species which explains why they prefer forests (Vitt and Zani, 1996). Anoles lay eggs rather than giving birth to live young, that is they are oviparous. The males flare their dewlaps to convey to the females that they are eligible partners. Fertilisation occurs internally via the cloaca of the female. Competition between different anole species leads to the partition of resources, including that of territory. *Anolis planiceps* coexists relatively peacefully with at least three other anole species in some areas (Vanzolini and Williams, 1996; Losos, 1994).

BEHAVIOUR. While foraging they have been observed to skip quickly across the leaves before coming to a standstill and blending in with their surroundings (Vanzolini and Williams, 1970). They may wait for prey then ambush them. Defences include running up trees and if caught by their tails these lizards, like many others, can drop their tails and flee, after which the tail eventually regenerates. Based on predators listed for other anole species the general predators of anoles are birds, snakes and other carnivorous reptiles larger than the anoles themselves, including other anoles.

APPLIED BIOLOGY. The status of the species has not been listed by IUCN (2016). However, the forest that these lizards are endemic to are all being depleted for resources by humans, thus diminishing their range, forcing the intersection of competing species or reduced resources. In relation to the other species of the *Anolis* group, which was frequently used as an evolutionary model, *Anolis planiceps* has few published studies on its behaviour and reproduction.

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Fig. 2. *Anolis planiceps* with extended dewlap.

[<https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anolis>, downloaded 24 October 2016]



Fig. 3. Supraorbital ridges of *Anolis planiceps*.

[<http://www.trinidad-tobagoherps.org/Images/planiceps.jpg>, downloaded 24 October 2016]



Fig. 4. Dorsal pattern on *Anolis planiceps*.

[http://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/Anolis_chrysolepis, downloaded 24 October 2016]



Fig. 5. Map showing the distribution of *Anolis planiceps*.

[<http://reptile-database.reptarium.cz/species?genus=Anolis&species=planiceps>, downloaded 24 October 2016]

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