



Lizard Warfare

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Male anoles (genus *Anolis*) are fiercely territorial. Although ritual behaviors involving posture, orientation, and head-bobs with dewlap extensions often dissuade an interloper from seriously challenging a resident male, battles sometimes ensue — and they can become violent, often leaving wounds that frequently become infected. Large abscesses on the jaws of males are a common sight.

In this instance, a male Crested Anole (*Anolis cristatellus*, the darker, slightly smaller individual with the notch in his tail crest) had established a domain dominated by a small palm tree on the grounds of the resort on Guana Island (British Virgin Islands) — only to find himself confronted one morning in October 2005 by a serious rival.

Each quickly assumed a threatening posture involving lateral presentation, erection of the nuchal (nape) crest, an inflated body, elevated tail, and gaping jaws (facing page) in an effort to convince his counterpart that further efforts were futile. Each possessed an advantage, the resident was defending an established territory with which he was intimately familiar, but the interloper was slightly larger. Circling each other in an attempt to establish and hold the high ground (top left), all caution was thrown to the wind and jaws locked in an attempt to throw the other to the ground (top center and right). The interloper succeeded on three occasions, with the resident quickly reengaging in what had now become open warfare.

Eventually, larger size prevailed, and the former resident was banished to the outer reaches of the fronds from which he soon disappeared from view. Within minutes, the proud victor claimed the spoils of battle (right) and life went on in the sometimes violent world of lizards.

