

WILDLIFE OF VICTORIA PARK

by John Serrao

6-LINED RACERUNNER

We're all familiar with the 2 species of anoles that are common around our homes and gardens: the native green anole and the far more abundant exotic brown anole. These lizards seem to be everywhere throughout central Florida. But there are other species of lizards in our region that aren't as visible. They tend to be more secretive than the anoles and live in the wilder, more natural areas. One of these is the 6-Lined Racerunner, an aptly named, yellow-striped lizard that hunts for insects in Florida's hot, open, sandy areas such as scrub woods and beach dunes.

In Victoria Park, racerunners can be found along the edges of the Hills' Golf Course, the Trails' bike paths, and especially the Gardens'

conservation areas. As they look for insects, their movements tend to be very halting — running or walking a few steps, stopping, proceeding again, and then sometimes pressing their bellies into the sand to rest and bask. But when one of these agile lizards is approached, it certainly lives up to its name by racing away like a streak of lightning. I've even seen them speeding away on just their hind legs from the wheels of my bicycle! As the days become cooler, these sun-loving lizards get less active and may even retreat into the burrows of gopher tortoises until temperatures once again rise.