

RED FOX

(*Vulpes vulpes*)

Canid Family/Carnivore



Newborn red foxes are blind and deaf. All pups have the characteristic white-tipped tail. They are **weaned** at 2 months, and this allows the **vixen** to join her mate in the hunt for food. If the family den is disturbed, the **vixen** is likely to move her pups to another site or to split them up among several dens. Gradually, the pups begin to accompany their parents on hunting trips, and use the den less and less often.



Fall dispersal begins with short trips from home, which gradually lengthen into journeys of 2 or 3 days. Eventually, most of the young leave for good to find new home ranges.

Usually, red foxes maintain solitary dens, except during the breeding season and while rearing the young. Although the male may visit the home ranges of other females, a pair bonds for life and the female always remains within the male's home range. The male and female appear able to keep track of each other through signs like scent and vocal communication, which consists of yaps, whines and high-pitched howls.

Special features: About the size of a miniature collie dog, the red fox has a slim build, a deep chest and a thin waist. The fox's cheeks sport a slight **ruff**, which emphasizes the long, pointed snout, black nose and large, pointed ears. Its distinctive eyes have vertical, slit-like pupils that can take in a maximum of light at night. Its hearing is sharp and its sense of smell, keen. Its bushy tail insulates the nose and footpads against winter cold when the fox curls up to sleep.

The long, silky coat is burnished orange or golden yellow, with a darker shade of rusty brown along the back. The chin, muzzle tip, throat and belly are

creamy white. The ears are white inside and black outside. The legs and paws are black. The tail has a white tip, which helps to distinguish this species from the grey fox, whose tail is black tipped.

Food: Mice, muskrats, groundhogs, cottontail rabbits, and European and snowshoe hares, fruits, frozen fruit in late winter and early spring, insects, eggs and birds.

Denning: Digs to make or enlarge holes for rearing young. Prefers brush-covered slopes with sandy soil. Avoids coyote habitat.

Predators: Coyotes, bobcats, lynxes and golden eagles.



The red fox has slit-like pupils that can take in a maximum of light at night.



There are usually 2 or 3 kits in a red fox litter, born in early spring.

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Distribution:

Southern Canada

Maturity:

1 year

Average life span:

10 to 12 years

Mating:

February thru April

Young born:

March to May

Gestation:

50 to 70 days

1 litter a year/Average 2 to 3 kits

Habitat:

Thinly treed areas, rocky hillsides and dry valley. Has adapted to agricultural and populated areas.

Management Issues:

A carrier of rabies as well as mange. Its ability to travel long distances contributes to the spread of disease.

