

The Red Fox

Cunning, clever, and fast to boot, it's the red fox. The red fox makes its home in grasslands, mountains, deserts, forests, farms, and even suburban areas. They have been hunted, trapped, and killed for their fur, for sport, and for being considered a nuisance. However, they have managed to thrive in urban and suburban areas, nonetheless. There are red foxes in Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia, and North America. Sometimes it can be difficult to tell the difference between a gray fox and a red fox. Gray foxes have black-tipped tails and red foxes have white tipped tails. Both can have a mixture of colors in their coats. Red foxes can have patches of gray and gray foxes can have patches of red. The red fox is listed as Least Concern by the IUCN.



The Stats...

Scientific name: *Vulpes vulpes*

Weight: Up to 31 lbs.

Length: Up to 35 inches long, plus their 22-inch tail

Height: Up to 20 inches, at the shoulder

Lifespan: Up to 12 years

- 1.) A male is called a dog and the female a vixen. The babies are called kits.
- 2.) Red foxes are Omnivores (eat plant and animal matter) that hunt rabbits, small rodents (like mice and rats), birds, and also eat vegetables, and fruits. They are constantly hunting. Even if they aren't hungry, they will hunt and then stash their food away for safe keeping.
- 3.) These foxes are not always red. Some are some are black, brown, and even silver. There can even be color variations within the same litter.
- 4.) Adult foxes can make about 12 different sounds where the kits can only make up to 8.
- 5.) Their predators include bald eagles, coyotes, gray wolves, bears, mountain lions, and humans.
- 6.) These foxes are Nocturnal (active at night) when living near humans. They are Crepuscular (active at dawn and dusk) elsewhere.
- 7.) Foxes are amazing night predators, due to their eyes being specially adapted for night vision. Behind the light sensitive cells lies another important layer called the tapetum lucidum which reflects light back through the eye. This actually doubles the intensity of images seen by the fox at night.

Did you know...?

The red fox's hearing is so keen that they can hear the ticking of a watch up to 40 yards away! They depend on this hearing to detect subtle movements underground.

- 8.) A fox will not chew its food. Instead, it uses its carnassial or shearing teeth to cut the meat into small chunks and then those are swallowed whole.
- 9.) They also use the magnetic field of the North Pole to plot their trajectory. When they detect prey, they use their famous pounce to attack their prey from above.
- 10.) A fox's patrolled range can be over 7 square miles in rural areas!
- 11.) Their den is typically a burrow underground, also known as an 'earth', but they can also be found above ground in a hollow.
- 12.) They are typically solitary except during breeding season.

Did you know...?

Foxes have whiskers on their hindlegs, forelegs, and face, which help them to navigate.

- 13.) Vixens are sometimes assisted in rearing their cubs by a non-breeding sister or a female kit from a previous litter. This gains the 'aunt' the necessary experience in rearing her own young, when the time comes.
- 14.) Mating season is between December – February. The female will call for a suitor with an eerie, high-pitched scream.
- 15.) A litter consists of 4 – 6 kits but can contain up to 13.

The Questions...

1.) What is the IUCN status of the red fox?

2.) Red foxes eat the following items...

3.) Red foxes are always red in color. True or False.

4.) They are both nocturnal and crepuscular. True or False.

5.) What is the part of their eye which helps them see so well at night?

6.) How keen is their hearing?

7.) Do foxes chew their food? Explain.

8.) Where else do they have whiskers, besides their face?

9.) What is their underground burrow called, and what is their above ground den called?

10.) These foxes patrol a range of how many miles?

11.) How do they plot their trajectory?

12.) A red fox weighs...

13.) These foxes have been hunted for what reasons?