

RED FOX

The Latin name for the Red fox is *Vulpes vulpes*.

The Red fox is the smallest member of the dog family, which also includes wolves, coyotes and jackals.

The Red fox is by far the most common species of fox. It is 90 to 105 cm long, not including the tail, and weighs about 7 kg (15 lb.). It is distinguished by its black ears and feet, and the white tip on the end of its tail. The coat is usually a shade of rusty-red or reddish-brown, sprinkled with light-tipped hairs. They also have short legs, an elongated narrow muzzle, erect triangular ears, thick fur and a long bushy tail.

The range of calls, from wailing to barking, often indicates a fox's presence before it is seen. The red fox is mainly solitary outside the breeding season. It gives birth to a single litter of 3-8 cubs, born in an underground earth, usually between March and April. The young appear above ground after 24 days, and are weaned at 8-10 weeks.

The Red fox mainly feeds on small birds, animals, insects, carrion, rodents and occasionally poultry or lambs. Sometimes they catch rabbits and other prey by chasing their own tails very fast. This fascinates the rabbit that watches without realising that the fox is gradually getting nearer and nearer. When the fox gets close enough it suddenly straightens out and grabs its prey.

Although the Red fox is mainly nocturnal, it will quite often move around in daylight or sunbathe. It is known as a scavenger, and will readily visit gardens in search of scraps.

Foxes live in holes called 'earths' which they either dig themselves or take over from rabbits or badgers.