

~ LIVING WITH WILDLIFE ~

## RED FOXES



### NATURAL HISTORY

These shy, nervous creatures are part of the Canid family. They weigh 5-6 kg and measure about 1 m in length and 36 cm in height. Foxes have long bodies, relatively short legs, pointed noses, bushy tails, and large pointed ears. With well developed teeth, strong non retractable claws and acute senses of smell, sight and hearing this species can live up to 2-6 yrs in the wild. Its coat is brownish-red on top and yellowish white underneath. They have black legs, feet and outer ears with black hairs mixed with red on the white-tipped tail.

Red Foxes prefer wooded or bushy areas but can be found in a wide range of habitats including farmland, prairie, forest, tundra, mountains and suburban areas. An adult male and 1-2 females with young will occupy a range from 25 acres to 8 square miles. They will remain in the same home range for life depending on the environment. Litters range from 1-13 with an average of 5. They are active year round and do not hibernate.

They are omnivorous, feeding mainly on rodents, rabbits, insects, and fruits, especially berries. They bury excess food for later consumption. Summer diet consists of insects, rodents, and fruit while in the winter they eat mainly small mammals like mice, squirrels, and rabbits. They perform a valuable service

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to humans by controlling the small rodent population and should be viewed as an ally.

Foxes' primary enemies are large predators like eagles, large owls, bobcats, domestic dogs, wolves, coyotes and humans. Many foxes are shot and poisoned by farmers concerned about livestock or hunted and trapped for their fur. Their main defense is elusiveness; when threatened they run away.

#### SITUATIONS AND SOLUTIONS:

**RED FOXES LIVING IN EMPTY BUILDINGS:** Try to be patient and allow them to remain, as parents and young will abandon the den by the time the young are approximately 3 months old. At this point the den should be completely blocked off as they will reuse the den at a later time. If waiting 3 months is not a viable option, any kind of disturbance such as loud noises and human scent will likely cause the vixen to move to another den. Once she is aware of the danger, allow her the opportunity to move her young without the threat of harm.

**FOXES PREYING ON DOMESTIC ANIMALS:** Fox may prey on chickens or other small creatures. They are not likely to attack cats and never attack dogs. To protect domestic animals, make sure the henhouse or other enclosure is well protected, using heavy-gauge mesh wire. Since foxes can climb over or dig under fences, a completely closed in structure is best. You can also try a watch dog to help keep foxes away.

**FOXES RAIDING GARBAGE CANS:** To "fox-proof" a garbage can, use rope, chains, or bungee cords to keep the lid closed. Secure the handle to a metal or wooden stake driven into the ground. Placing cans in wooden bins or in the garage may also limit fox access.

**SICK OR DISORIENTED FOXES:** Do not attempt to touch a sick fox. One person should try and keep the animal in sight while another calls a local wildlife hospital for assistance.



**Medicine River**  
WILDLIFE CENTRE

Box 115 Spruce View AB T0M 1V0 (403)728-3467 www.mrwc.ca

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