

For release: Due to the frequent sighting of the red fox in the area it is important for the residents to understand the animal. As natural habitats are being replaced by residential building residents are often finding the animal in their back yards.

The Red Fox...

The red fox is the most familiar of all species of foxes because of the recognizable reddish-brown fur. It is a common animal around North America, North Africa, and Eurasia. It has been introduced in Australia where it is a threatened species. It is identified by its rusty red fur, white underbelly, and black ears and legs. They can see as well as a cat and can run up to 45 mph.

The red fox is found from prairies to forest and shares its territories with raccoons, however more numbers of them have been increasingly found in suburban areas because of their adaptability. They eat rodents, insects, fruits, worms, eggs, birds and other small animals. Primarily active at twilight, the red fox stalks its prey like a cat, gets as close as possible and then pounces on it and chases it. They will bury any left over food to save it for later. Unlike other animals, the red fox hears low frequency sounds very well. They can hear small animals digging under the ground and will sometimes dig in the snow or dirt to catch their prey. The red fox uses a variety of vocalizations to communicate, from a distinctive three-yip "lost call", to a shriek like the sound of a human scream. They also have an excellent sense of vision, smell and touch.

Mating around mid-January, the red fox gives birth to three to eight kits around the middle of March. The kits are weaned at nine weeks and start to hunt with their parents. Until they are ready and able to hunt on their own, they eat regurgitated food given to them by their mother and after a few weeks are given live prey to eat and "play" with. Playing with live prey helps the kits develop the skills they will need when hunting. They remain with their parents until late summer or early fall.

The fox uses several dens throughout its territory. Large dens are used for winter living, birthing and raising young while smaller dens are used for food storage and emergency

purposes. A series of tunnels connect to the main den and the same den is usually used over a number of generations. Eluding predators, the red fox will circle and backtrack instead of fighting off their offenders. They avoid coyotes, but will coexist in the same area competing for food. The red fox is a solitary animal and does not form packs like wolves. Their territories will overlap sometimes, but are regularly defended. Scent glands above the fox's tail are used to mark its territory.

The red fox is usually taken by a natural predator as young pups when they are not protected by their parents. Adult foxes may be attacked by coyotes and wolves. But their main predators are humans who hunt and kill them for their fur. They are considered by many a threat to poultry. They have been known to target domestic birds if they are not protected. They do help around farms by controlling populations of small rodents.

Foxes readily adapt to noise-making devices, however some may be used temporarily to reduce activity in the area, ie timed tape recordings, radios, banging pans to frighten the animal away. Revolving lights can also be useful. When properly trained, some breeds of dog, such as the Great Pyrenees and Akbash dogs, have been useful in preventing predation. The effectiveness of dogs, even the "guard dog" breeds, seems to depend entirely on training and the individual disposition of the dog.

Exclusion methods include: Construction on net wire fences with openings 3 inches (8cm) or less. Bury the bottom of the fence 1-2 feet with an apron of net wire at least 12 inches. A top or roof of net wire may also be necessary to exclude all foxes, since some will readily climb a fence. A 3-wire electric fence spaced 6 to 12 and 18 inches above the ground can repel red foxes.

Cultural methods : Protection of small animals during the spring denning period when adults are actively acquiring prey for their young is important. Foxes, like other wild canids, will often return to established denning areas year after year. They will den in close proximity to human habitation, under wood piles, close to buildings. Watching for signs of depredations will be the first hint a den is near. Moth balls may be a repellent

Residents must avoid feeding the animals and remove any food source including fruit from fruit trees which may have fallen in their yard and make sure compost piles are secure. The elimination of healthy foxes is not warranted based solely on human safety concerns. In many cases homeowner's perceptions of problems are unfounded and in some cases, the mere presence of a fox is perceived as a problem. Foxes can grow accustomed to human activity but are seldom aggressive toward people.