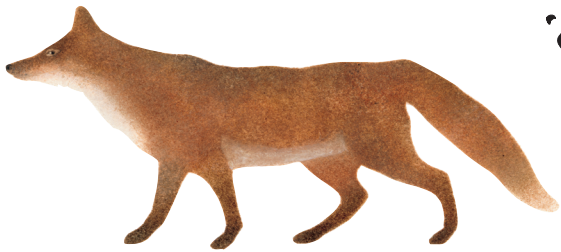




# RED FOX

*Vulpes vulpes*



## Appearance

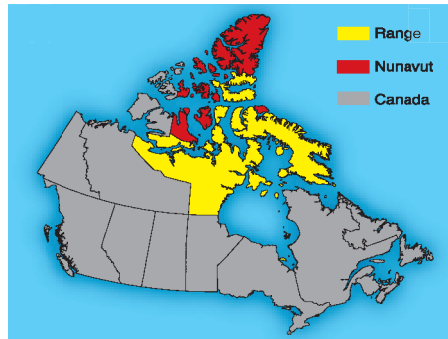
Red foxes are bigger than arctic foxes. They have pointed faces and ears and long bushy tails. Although they are called red foxes, there are three different colour phases varying from reddish brown to grey-brown to black with silver highlights. There can be all three phases in the same litter. Males are a little bigger than females. The average weight for males and females is between 3.6 and 6.8kg. The tail can measure up to half this length.

## Food And Feeding

The red fox is omnivorous and will eat almost anything. Small mammals make up a large portion of the winter diet and include moles, shrews, muskrats, voles and mice as well as hares. During the summer, it will also feed on birds' eggs, some insects and vegetation such as grasses and berries. A red fox will also eat seal pups, beaver, garbage and carcasses left by other animals. One of the reasons the red fox is so widely distributed is that it can eat almost anything and therefore is less sensitive to population crashes in specific species. The red fox has keen senses and hunts by smell, sight and sound.

## Behaviour

Red foxes are shy and nervous animals that appear to be very intelligent and are most active at night. They have a high-pitched bark that is used when they are startled or to warn other foxes of danger. They run with a light, quick stride leaving paw prints in a line in the snow. The family stays together from the time of mating until the pups go out on their own. For the rest of the year, during the autumn and winter, the animals live a solitary life. Red foxes live in dens usually located in sandy or gravelly soil and they sometimes take over and fix up an abandoned den. The same dens may be used year after year



and they usually have more than one den for escape purposes.

## Range

The red fox is found throughout Canada and in many parts of Nunavut including Baffin Island, Southampton Island

and most parts of the Kitikmeot and Kivalliq region. It has been spotted as far north as Resolute Bay and on the southern coast of Ellesmere Island.

## Habitat

Red foxes live in places close to lakeshores, in river valleys, natural clearings and in alpine and arctic tundra. Normal home ranges vary between 5 and 35 square kilometers.

## Reproduction

The breeding period for red foxes is sometime between February and March. Many scientists believe that red foxes will stay as a mating pair for life. The gestation period for red foxes is just under 2 months and an average of 5 pups are born per litter. At about one month of age the young foxes are able to eat small mammals brought to them by their parents but only if the parents chew them first. The pups go out on their own when they are between 3.5 and 4 months old to find their own hunting territory. They reach sexual maturity at 10 months.

## Status Survival and Management

According to the Nunavut Wild Species 2000 report, the current status of the red fox is secure. Few live longer than 3 or 4 years in the wild. The main predators for the red fox in Nunavut include humans, other carnivores and the young may be vulnerable to some birds. It has been an important fur-bearing animal in the history of trapping in Canada.

## Did You Know?

Red foxes traveled to the arctic islands sometime in the 1940's. They adapted very well and have competed with arctic foxes and other carnivores for food and shelter ever since.

