

FOX FAQs

Where do foxes live?

The fox can be found all over Britain, on sea cliffs and salt marshes, high mountains and peat bogs, and in larger cities. During the breeding season (January to March) the female fox (vixen) searches for a suitable place to rear her cubs - the fox's earth. This could be anything from an old badger sett to the space beneath a garden shed! If you find a vixen using part of your garden as an earth, please don't disturb her - she'll only be there until her cubs are weaned.

What do foxes eat?

Almost anything - they're true omnivores with a diet that can include beetles, grasshoppers, earthworms, blackberries, bread, cheese, rabbits.... The fox will readily adapt its menu to what is available in the locality - scavenging from litter bins, compost heaps and bird tables.

Are foxes a threat to livestock or pets?

The fox is a threat to poultry, and can kill large numbers of fowl in a hen house with the intention of burying the meat for a time of scarcity. Pets like rabbits or guinea pigs that are left in an exposed run can also be vulnerable to a hungry fox so make sure they're returned to their hutch at night. In a confrontation with a cat, the fox will be the one to back off.

What are the breeding habits of foxes?

Foxes mate in January or February when there's increased noise and activity, and most cubs are born in March. The vixen will select a suitable breeding den (the earth) - and the family is fed by the male. By June the cubs are playing together, although they still depend on their parents for food. By autumn they are adult size and the family group disperses. The average life span of a fox is only two years, although they have been recorded as living for up to nine years in the wild.

Can a fox be kept as a pet?

Although small cubs look appealing they soon grow and become unsuitable as pets (but too tame to be returned to the wild). Therefore, tempting though it may be it's inadvisable to rescue an apparently 'orphaned' cub - left alone the vixen will probably return to it.

Did you know?

Foxes generally live in family groups - a male, a vixen, her cubs and sometimes one or more non-breeding vixens. In areas where the fox is hunted or snared and has a shorter life-expectancy, family groups do not become established and they may then live in pairs.

The fox only uses its earth in the breeding season. For the rest of the year the fox lies above ground in bushes or dense cover and is usually only active at night.

Foxes communicate by scent, noise and body language. Their urine and droppings contain a scent which acts as a marker for their territory. They have a complex system of calls, from the yelping of a cub separated from its mother to the loud contact calls and the harsh barking of the vixen.

Fox facial expressions are similar to those of dogs, and include the aggressive curling back of the lips into a snarl. They can also make their hair stand on end so that they appear much larger than they really are. When a fox greets a family group member, it will run forward with wagging tail, and crouch down with its ears pressed to the side of its head.

Foxes have good eyesight, and in poor light their eyes will dilate to a large round pupil which can pick up as much light as possible. It's aided by a mirror-like layer at the back of the eye which reflects light - causing a fox's eyes to shine in a car's headlight.

Contact:

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