

The Red Fox



Images courtesy of Robbie Murphy

Scientific Name: *Vulpes vulpes* **Irish Name:** Madra Rua

The fox has a thick coat of reddish-brown fur, with white underparts and a long, bushy tail. The fox looks very like a dog, this is because they belong to the Canidae Family, the same family as the dog. They have dog-like features but are typically smaller and thinner than the average dog.



Foxes can be found in most parts of the world. In Ireland they are very common and widespread and can be found both in the country and in the city. In the countryside, they like to live near forests or in scrub or tall vegetation.

In towns and cities they make homes in large gardens or derelict properties. They are usually nocturnal animals, preferring to venture out at night under the cover of darkness to search for food. It is still possible however to see foxes out and about during the day. Foxes are known to be sly and cunning. This has given rise to the phrase “as sly as a fox”!



Food for Foxes

Foxes are omnivorous—they eat most small animals like rats, mice, frogs and rabbits, but also like fruit, berries, earthworms and insects. Foxes will eat food scraps left out for them by humans, but it is not advised to feed foxes as they need to be able to hunt for food themselves. Remember, though they may appear to be tame, they are still wild animals. Unfortunately foxes also like chickens and there is a constant battle to protect chicken coops. The fox’s main predators are humans.



Home Sweet Home

Foxes usually live in a shelter called an “earth” or a



“den”. This could be a hole in the ground or in a bank. Sometimes earths are built between the roots of trees. They are often concealed by thick undergrowth and are hard to see.

Fox Family

A male fox is known as a **dog**, a female is a **vixen** and a young fox is a **cub**. Foxes are very good parents to their young. Cubs will stay with the family until adult size and will then leave their parents and find territories of their own.



FACT FILE

Length: 95-139 cm

Colour: Reddish-brown, with white underparts.

Diet: Small animals, such as rats, mice, frogs & rabbits, also fruits, berries, earthworms & insects.

Habitat:

Distribution: In the countryside & in towns & cities throughout Ireland.

Number of young: An average of 4-6 cubs per litter & 1 litter per year.