

CREATURES OF THE CREATOR

Part Five: The Fox



The common fox (*Canis vulpes*) can be found throughout most of the world. Many of us have seen them in wooded as well as more urban areas. They can live in the deepest wilderness or right in your own

backyard. The fox is an interesting animal because it is similar in ways to both dogs and cats. Although foxes look much like small dogs, their light body weight and style of hunting (stalk and pounce) are more cat-like.

Species Of Fox

There are over 20 known species of foxes. A common one in North America is the Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*). With its familiar red-orange color, this is the one we most often see in our yards or greedily eyeing our picnic lunches from the edge of the campground. The Red Fox generally has a white belly and a white tipped tail with black ears and paws. It comes in other colors too. Some are light gray and some can be solid black.

The Gray Fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) is also common in North America. They are not as inclined to come near people as the Red Fox is, preferring small canyons or brushy, wilder areas. They are also primarily



Gray Fox

nocturnal. The Gray Fox is sometimes known as the Tree Fox because it is the only fox that regularly climbs to escape predators. They can climb just about anything from telephone poles to fences and buildings. The Gray Fox is also a very good swimmer.

The Arctic Fox (*Alopex lagopus*) is another well-known species. This white fox is native to the cold regions of the northern hemisphere.

Prey and Predators

Although we tend to think of foxes in the hen house, they actually prefer to catch smaller and easier prey like mice, worms, birds, and squirrels. Actually, foxes are omnivores, which means they will eat almost anything, including vegetables and berries. They hide the food they don't want to eat right away by burying it in the ground.

The enemies of the fox are the large predatory birds (like eagles and owls), wolves and coyotes, and people who hunt them or trap them for their fur. Foxes tend to defend themselves by hiding or being elusive. Thus sometimes a person who is tricky or sly is called a fox.

The fox is not an attack threat to humans, so there are no worries if you see one in the backyard, however foxes can carry rabies so they should not be treated as pets, and you should be careful of getting too close to them in the wild. In Europe, they actually vaccinate foxes against rabies by setting out cubes of fish and meat laced with vaccine. In Germany, this method of controlling the disease has been very successful.

Young Foxes



Newborn Red Fox

After a 60 day gestation, young foxes (kits) are born in litter sizes of one to six. During the first two months, the male (dog) fox helps the female (vixen) to raise the cubs. In the first two weeks, the cubs cannot see or hear anything. After about three weeks, the fur color begins to lighten from the black they are born with, their teeth break through and they begin to chew. After a month or so, the cubs begin to eat meat (This is when you might have to watch your chickens!) After about 10 months, the foxes are fully mature. They can live up to 14 years, but in the wild they rarely live more than five because of predators, disease, and accidents.

Foxes In the Bible

Samson was a very strong man, but not always a very wise man. He chose to marry a Philistine woman (the Philistines were heathen and often enemies of the Israelites). Once, when he went to his wife's room, he found that his father-in-law had given his wife to his friend. This angered Samson, and 300 foxes became involved.

Judges 15:3-5 Samson said to them, "This time I have a right to get even with the Philistines; I will really harm them." So he went out and caught three hundred foxes and tied them tail to tail in pairs. He then fastened a torch to every pair of tails, lit the torches and let the foxes loose in the standing grain of the Philistines. He burned up the shocks and standing grain, together with the vineyards and olive groves.

In our day, while God does not forbid marriage between

believers and unbelievers, it is not generally wise for a Christian to marry a non-Christian. Samson's relationships with heathen women caused much trouble for him. Ideally, husband and wife are not only both Christian, but both of the same Christian fellowship too.

When the exiles returned to Jerusalem after their captivity in Babylon, they began to rebuild the walls of the city. Some were against this work, including a man named Tobiah.

Nehemiah 4:3 Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, "What they are building—if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!"

Of course, a fox would not break down the wall, nor would anyone else. *Under God's protection and guidance*, the wall was rebuilt in spite of Tobiah and his friends. God is able to accomplish His will even in the face of His enemies!

Jesus' referred to the fox several times.

Matthew 8:20 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

What does this comment teach us about our Savior? How does it help us to appreciate what He did for us?

Luke 13:31-32 At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.'"

What was Jesus' *goal*? Could Herod's "fox-like" trickery keep the Lord from accomplishing His purposes?

Resources

<http://www.biblepicturegallery.com/pictures/Mammals.htm>
<http://members.aol.com/kauchter/facts.htm>
<http://www.charmingfare.com/animalfacts/redfox.php>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gray_Fox
<http://www.projectwildlife.org/living-fox.htm>