

Fox Fact Sheet

INTRODUCTION

Valued as one of the classic representatives from the wild canid family, foxes are found throughout the state in both rural and urban landscapes. In Georgia, there are two species of fox - the gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) and the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*).

SPECIES DESCRIPTION

Gray Fox

Grizzled gray in color with patches of reddish fur on the neck, flanks, legs and underside of the tail, gray foxes weigh between 8-12 pounds, are 34-40 inches in total length. A black stripe runs along their back down to the tail tip. Sexual maturity occurs at approximately one year of age and the mating season runs from January through April. Following a 53-day gestation period, females give birth to 2-7 pups. Considered monogamous, both male and female gray foxes work together to raise pups until the pups become independent after about 3 months of age.

Red Fox

A furry deep reddish brown to yellowish red animal with a characteristic bushy red tail tipped with white, the red fox weighs between 8-14 pounds, and is 36-45 inches in total length. Sexual maturity occurs at approximately one year of age and the mating season runs from January through February. Following a 53-day gestation period, females give birth to 4-5 pups. Considered monogamous, both male and female work together to raise pups until the pups disperse at about 6 months of age.

HABITS AND HABITAT

Gray Fox

Also referred to as a forest fox, the gray fox is native to the eastern forests of both Georgia and the United States. The association of the gray fox with forests may in part be based on the gray foxes ability to elude predators such as predatory birds, coyotes, and bobcats by climbing trees—a feature unique among foxes. Even though gray foxes are associated primarily with forested areas, they are also found along woodland edges and in and around urban/suburban areas. Gray foxes are quite territorial spending most of their life in a one-square mile home range. Gray foxes are considered carnivores because a large portion of their diet includes rabbits, rats, mice, squirrels, birds, and insects, however they also will eat carrion and vegetation, including all types of fruits, nuts and berries.

Red Fox

Introduced into America by European settlers and now found throughout Georgia and most of the United States, the red fox is characterized as an old field or edgespecies since it is commonly found in areas of mixed pine-hardwood forests interspersed with fields, cropland and/or grasslands. Red foxes are quite common in urban and suburban areas throughout Georgia because of the abundance of food in these areas and their adaptability. Oftentimes home range and territories overlap and vary in size depending on red fox population densities and food abundance. Red foxes are considered carnivores because a large portion of their diet includes rabbits, rats, mice, squirrels, birds and insects,

however they also will eat carrion and vegetation including all types of fruits, nuts and berries. When preyed upon by coyotes, bobcats, and/or predatory birds, red foxes utilize their adaptation of speed and endurance to elude predators. This adaptation is what made this species so popular for fox and hound hunting.

NUISANCE AND DISEASE

Because of the adaptability of both gray and red foxes to urban and suburban environments, as well as the abundant food and shelter associated with these areas, foxes are quite common in cities, towns, subdivisions, and even near rural home sites as well as in their natural habitat. Although foxes are primarily nocturnal hunters, it is not uncommon to see a fox during the day. If you see a fox during the day in either the woods or in your yard, the best advice is to simply leave it alone. You may want to remove any bird feeders that may be attracting mice and birds to your yard, which in turn attracts foxes. Other prey items for foxes include domestic fowl like chickens, guineas, and ducks. To alleviate domestic depredation issues, building exclusionary pens is the best solution. Both red and gray foxes can carry diseases and parasites such as rabies, distemper, roundworms, fleas and mange mites.

FURBEARER VALUE

Red and gray foxes are considered both game species and furbearers. Hunting and trapping seasons are from approximately December through February. Foxes are typically harvested for their fur value that is used in the coat and trim markets.