

red fox *Vulpes Vulpes*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Carnivora

Family: Canidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The red fox has a head-body length of 22 to 25 inches and a tail about 14 to 16 inches long. It weighs eight to 15 pounds. The back fur is red, and the belly fur is white. The ears, legs and tops of the feet have black fur. The ears stand up straight and are very noticeable. The tail is fluffy with black hairs near the end and a white tip.

BEHAVIORS

The red fox may be found statewide in Illinois. It lives in grasslands, field edges, bottomland woods and brushy areas. The red fox eats berries, birds, carrion, frogs, fruits, grasses, insects, mammals and turtles. The diet varies with the season. In the summer and fall, plants and insects are its main food. In the spring and winter it eats mainly mammals. It is active mostly at night. It marks its territory with a distinct scent. The male is called a "dog," and the female is a "vixen." The red fox barks, howls, whines and yips. It uses a den to raise its family. The den is an underground burrow. Mating occurs in January and February. Young are born in March and April after a 51-day gestation period. After the pups are old enough, the family leaves the den site and moves to a new spot that provides food and shelter. Families remain together until fall.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; southern Illinois lowlands

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; edge; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand prairie; shrub prairie