

# FANTASTIC Mr Fox



Foxes are loved by so many of us and particularly with storytellers all over the world... the first story that comes to mind is of course, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* by Roald Dahl, but a fox and a vixen also starred in the Disney cartoon version of *Robin Hood* as Robin Hood and Maid Marian. That's right, a female fox is called a vixen, and actually, a male fox is called a dog!

That's because foxes are in fact members of the dog family, they're just not as domesticated! Baby foxes are called 'pups', 'kits' or 'cubs' and a group of foxes is called a 'skulk' or a 'leash.' Foxes are spread all over the world, living just about anywhere – in the countryside, forests, mountains and even cities!

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Are there different types of fox?

Yes, there are and the most common fox is the Red Fox. These can be found almost everywhere, from the Arctic Circle to the Americas, across Europe and even Australia! This is because its flexible diet allows it to adapt to many different environments.

As well as the Red Fox, there's also the Arctic Fox, which lives in the northernmost parts of the hemisphere and can handle the cold better than most animals on earth. The thick fur of the Arctic Fox means that it won't start to feel the cold until about -70 degrees! That's about three or four times colder than the freezer in your kitchen!

There's also the Fennec Fox, which is the smallest of all foxes. It's roughly the size of a kitten and lives in the North African deserts. Here, temperatures are much hotter than in the Arctic, so the Fennec Fox needs to sleep during the day and only come out at night.

In fact, all foxes are mostly nocturnal and so you only see them at night. They can also be crepuscular, which means they sometimes come out a bit earlier at sundown and during twilight hours.

Foxes have amazing hearing and can hear things up to 120 feet away!



## FUN FACT!

A fox can run up to a speed of 30 miles an hour!

## When they do come out, where do they go and what do they do?

When the light starts to go, foxes will hunt for food. They have excellent hearing and a strong sense of smell to help navigate through the darkness and easily find their prey, which can include mice and birds, but they will also eat roots and berries. And for those foxes that live in cities, they'll even eat the rubbish that people leave out!

Foxes like to be alone or just keep to their own small family groups and they'll hunt for themselves or their family. In fact, foxes are great parents! When fox pups are born, they can't see and don't open their eyes until after 9 days. During this time, they'll stay with the mum in the den, while the dad goes out to hunt and bring back food. The pup will then stay with its parents until it's 7 months old. That might not sound very old but in the wild that's quite a long time!

## Are foxes ever in danger?

Sadly, yes they are. Although, there are laws in place in different countries across the world, some people like to hunt foxes for sport and for their fur. There are also lots of dangers from other wildlife, as foxes hunt at the same time as many other bigger predators.

The fox's amazing hearing, fast speed and strong sense of smell therefore comes in very handy, not just to find food, but to avoid trouble! The good news is, they can often 'outfox' many of the threats they face.

