



Foxes

Foxes in the UK

Foxes can be found all over the UK, from the quietest bits of countryside to the busiest, noisiest cities. In many towns they now live side by side with us humans. The reason we don't see them very often is that they usually come out to eat, breed and play when we're asleep in our beds.

Foxes are true survivors, living and breeding all over the place and eating almost anything. In fact when they're peckish, they'll chomp away on everything from rabbits, mice, insects and blackberries to cheese, pizza, chicken curry and most of the other food you and I throw away!



FOXY FACTS

Here are ten things you might not know about these crafty critters:

- 1 The fox is a member of the dog family, but in many ways it looks and acts more like a cat. For example, foxes sometimes play with their prey before they kill it, like cats do. And foxy eyes have vertical, slit-like pupils, just the same as your pet moggy.
- 2 Foxes are surprisingly small. Some people think they're the same height as a medium-sized dog, but in fact, many foxes are only a bit bigger than a cat.
- 3 Foxes have amazing hearing. A fox can hear a watch ticking 40 yards away!
- 4 Male foxes are known as 'dogs', female foxes are known as 'vixens' and baby foxes are known as 'cubs'.
- 5 If a fox has more food than it needs, it will often bury it in the ground and pee on the spot, so it can find the food again later!
- 6 Adult foxes are dark reddish in colour, but fox cubs aren't actually born with red fur. In fact, the babies are chocolate brown. They usually start changing colour when they're four or five weeks' old.
- 7 Foxes usually breed in January or early February. When foxes are getting to know each other, they will often bark loudly or even come out with terrifying 'screams'!
- 8 Foxes speak to each other using at least 28 different types of call.
- 9 Foxes' famous bushy tails are very useful things. A fox uses his tail to help him balance, he uses it as a blanket to keep him warm, and he uses it as a flag to wave at other foxes.
- 10 Foxes can run at speeds of 30 miles per hour. That's faster than the Olympic sprinter Usain Bolt!

Famous fox in fiction

The world's most famous fox is probably Mr Fox, from the children's book *Fantastic Mr Fox* by Roald Dahl.



When their lives are threatened, Mr Fox and his family have to pit their wits against against wealthy farmers Boggis, Bunce and Bean. Can you guess who comes out on top?

Animal detectives - hunting for foxes in your neighbourhood

If you find any of these clues in your local area, it's likely that foxes aren't too far away!

Fur: Look for reddish-brown tufts of hair left on barbed wire fences and thorny hedges.

Footprints: Keep an eye out for foxy pawprints in soft

ground or snow.

Droppings: See if you can spot any fox droppings in your garden - but make sure you don't touch them! They are smaller than dog droppings, and are usually pointed and twisted at one end.

Mess! Occasionally, foxes will root around in dustbins to look for food. If you find a bin bag that's been ripped open during the night, a crafty fox might be to blame!

