

The Arctic Fox (*Vulpes lagopus*)



Arctic foxes are found in Alaska, Canada, Greenland, Russia, Scandinavia, and Iceland. They prefer tundra and coastal habitat, usually near rocky shores, and have been observed ranging far out onto pack ice in winter. The arctic fox is thought to have originated from Europe approximately 2.6 million years ago during the glacial period. Fossil remains of a canine pre-adapted for harsh arctic environments have been found as far as the Tibetan plateau.

The arctic fox's pelage changes twice a year to allow it to blend into its environment, which aids in its ability to avoid detection by prey and predators. Their tail is approximately the size of their body and aids in keeping them warm in harsh environments when they aren't near their den. There is lots of fur between their pads, allowing them to travel quickly across the snow and aiding in their thermoregulation ability.



With a litter size between 7- 15 pups the arctic fox produces the most pups at one time. The responsibility of raising the pups is more often than not left to the mother while the male leaves the den to scavenge and hunt for food to bring back to the female. There have been many documented cases of alloparental care from other family members, as they raise the young communally.

The arctic fox is a cunning predator who hunts young seals, sea birds and their eggs, lemmings, and rodents. They are also very opportunistic, especially in the winter months. They will follow bears, wolverines, and packs of wolves to scavenge their kills. In Scandinavia, there have been documented cases of them preying on reindeer. The Arctic fox communication is comparable to other canine species with the exception of their territorial tail displays.



The arctic foxes' main predator of concern is the Red fox but with the threat of its habitat shrinkage due to climate change, that may also change. Currently the Arctic foxes' conservation status is of Least concern but in areas such as Scandinavia and Greenland they are considered critically endangered due to poor management practices and with the ice sheet building less consistently Iceland has placed them on their Vulnerable status.