

# I SAW IT ON THE TRAIL

BY: **Rob Golda** - HIKING MICHIGAN



The Red Fox, smallest member of the dog family, which also includes wolves, coyotes, jackals, and dogs. Foxes are characterized by short legs, an elongated narrow muzzle, erect triangular ears, thick fur, and a long bushy tail. Foxes are found throughout the Americas, Eurasia, and Africa, inhabiting mostly forest and desert regions. Most of the ten species to which the red fox belongs can adapt to diverse climates and habitats.

Most foxes feed on mice, voles, rabbits, birds' eggs, fruit, large insects, and carrion. Because their prey is small, foxes are solitary rather than pack hunters. They generally work territories of less than 3 sq mi, which they defend from other foxes. They are swift, agile runners; the red fox can reach a speed of 30 mph.

The red fox is by far the most common species of fox. It is 36 to 42 in long, not including the tail, weighs about 15 lbs, and is distinguished by black ears and feet and a white tip on the tail. The coat is usually some shade of rusty-red or reddish-brown, sprinkled with light-tipped hairs. The red fox ranges across North Africa and from northern Mexico to the Arctic. Within these vast zones diverse variations of the red fox have developed; those of the south are smaller and have lighter-colored coats, and those of the north are larger, with thicker and darker coats. The silver fox, valued for its black, frosted fur, is simply a variant of the red fox.

The great alertness of the red fox, and its keen senses of smell, hearing, and sight, enable it to live close to human habitation without being easily noticed. Farmland with woodlots and open fields provides it with good cover and abundant rodents, especially field mice.

The Fox commonly lives in a burrow that was dug by another animal or may dig a tunnel of its own in loose soil. Dens can have more than one entrance and are usually lined with grass and leaves.

The female (vixen) has 4 or 5 pups in the early Spring, but can produce a litter up to 10 pups. There may be more than one family per Den. The male brings food to the vixen so she can stay with the pups in the Den. In a month pups can eat meat and they will stay together until Fall. By winter, the young are on their own, and many of the pups die before their 1st birthday



FRONT



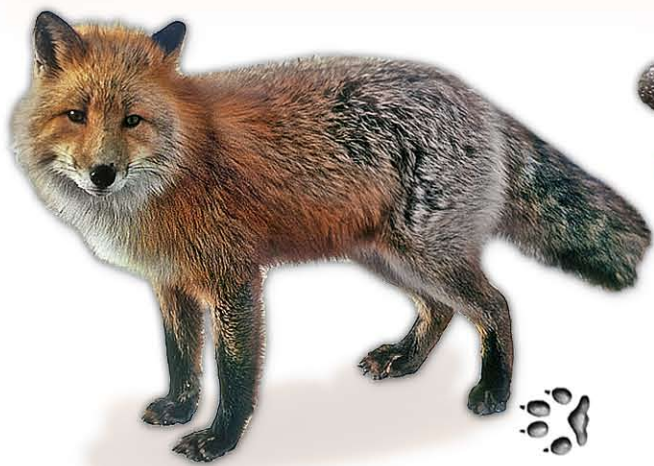
HIND



Pups in their Springtime Den



RED FOX "Scat"  
Note: twisting & curling of droppings



Full grown Adult Red Fox



Running Fox

**DETAILS:**  
**Weight:** 12lbs - 15lbs  
**Size:** 36 - 42" long, not including tail of up to 18" in length.  
**Lifespan:** 3-4 years, but has been known to live to be 10 years old.