



# Ask about Ireland



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## Red Fox



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**Latin:** *Vulpes vulpes*

**Irish:** *Madra rua/Sionnach*

**Size:** An adult fox measures about 70cm from head to tail, and the tail itself is about 40cm.

**Months seen:** All year

**Habitat:** Many different habitats, from the arctic tundra to urban landscapes and open grassland. However, they prefer to live in the countryside close to woodlands.

**Home:** Foxes live in dens under the ground, which are sometimes made from an old rabbit hole or a badger's sett.

**Food:** Foxes are omnivores and eat rabbits, small mammals, birds, insects, berries, grasses and discarded food. Urban foxes will raid rubbish bins for food.

**Features:** A fox is easily recognised by its long, pointed ears, bushy tail and narrow snout. Despite its name, it is not always red but can vary in colour from pale yellow to deep reddish-brown, with a white underside.

In wintertime, its fur coat becomes thicker to help insulate against the cold weather. Although foxes are mostly nocturnal, they can sometimes be seen during the day.

The mating season is in December and this is when foxes are at their noisiest. After dusk, the males give out a short, loud bark and the females respond with ear-piercing screams. Cubs are usually born in February to March. They are independent by the autumn and are fully mature a year later.

Foxes can live for up to ten years in the wild, but due to hunting, disease and road accidents most will only live for two to three years.

