

Grey Fox

Urocyon cinereoargenteus

Mammal

Scientific Name

Urocyon cinereoargenteus

Other Names

Tree Fox

Range

Southern North America to Northern South America

Habitat

Temperate forest, wetland, chaparral, woodland, riparian habitats, deciduous forests and mixed agricultural areas.

Description

A small fox with short, grizzled, grey fur and reddish highlights.

Average Size

Length: 31 – 44 in. with tail
Weight: 7 – 13 lbs.

Lifespan

In the wild: 6 – 8 years
In captivity: Up to 15 years

Diet

In the wild: Small vertebrates (rats, mice, birds), insects and fruit
In captivity: Prepared carnivore diet, mice, dry cat chow, fruits, vegetables and hard boiled eggs

Gestation

51 – 63 days

Sexual Maturity

10 months of age

Offspring

2 – 7 kits

Predators

Coyote, bobcat, large raptors

Population Status

Stable



Behavior

Grey Foxes are solitary animals for the majority of the year, coming together socially only for breeding and rearing kits. They are primarily nocturnal but have been observed hunting at dawn and dusk (crepuscular). Like most members of the dog family, Grey Foxes are verbally and physically communicative. Barking, growling, and whining, combined with erect hair and tail posturing, lets others in the vicinity know what is happening. These foxes are also territorial and use scent glands throughout their body to mark their home and hunting areas.

Grey Foxes are resourceful animals that can find shelter in almost any habitat. They usually use abandoned woodpiles, unused animal burrows, or even human outbuildings for their den sites. In addition, because these foxes are excellent climbers, they can make their den several feet above the ground. Once up in the foliage, they can move about the trees with ease, simply jumping from branch to branch. This climbing adaptation protects them and their food caches from the larger, introduced Red Fox.

Reproduction and Breeding

Breeding season for this species varies widely depending upon the particular range and habitat, but they will usually begin to form pairs in the late winter and breed in the spring. Grey Foxes are monogamous for the season, with the male and female working together to support the offspring as they grow. Early on, the male does the majority of the hunting while the female prepares the underground den site. Later, when the female is nursing the kits in the den, the male takes on the role of sole provider and protector of the family.

The kits are weaned at six weeks of age but hunt alongside their parents for up to one year while learning the survival skills they will need later in life. The family remains together until the fall when the young reach sexual maturity and disperse.

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Conservation

This species is common in most parts of its range, but appears to be restricted to locally dense habitats where it is not excluded by sympatric Coyotes and Bobcats. Grey Foxes are not protected by IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) or CITES (Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species) but are protected as a harvested species in Canada and the United States. Fortunately for the Grey Fox, their lower fur quality compared with other species has prevented the widespread commercial trade of their pelts for human use.

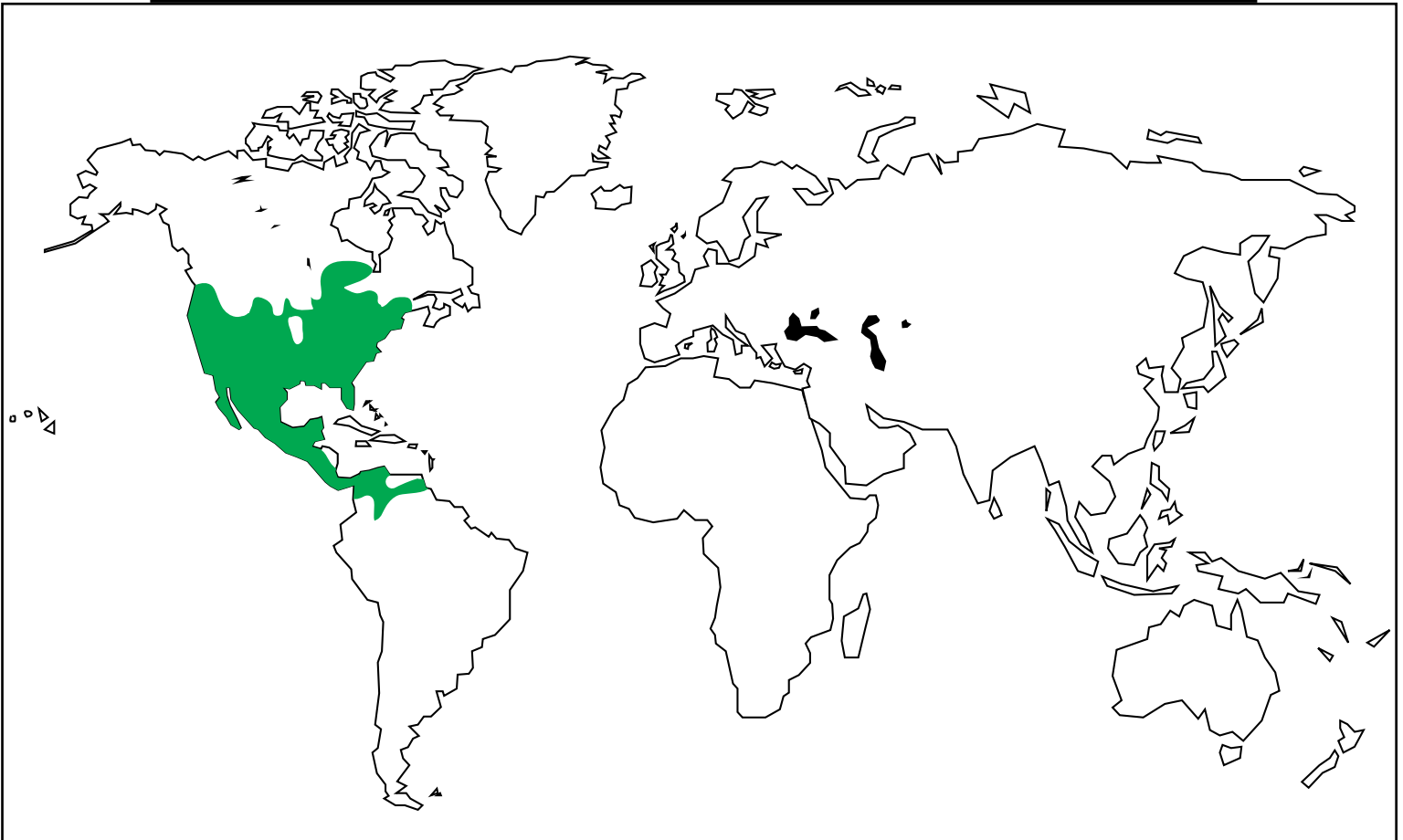
Looking to the future, habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation of suitable dens and hunting areas may be particularly problematic in regions where human numbers are increasing rapidly. For such a widespread species, little research has been conducted and there is insufficient information about their status and ecology outside of the United States and Canada. Data on this species' response to human-altered landscape and the effect of their hunting in urban settings without larger predators could prove valuable to fox and small carnivore conservation.

Amazing Facts

The Grey Fox is one of two canid species able to climb trees. The other is the Raccoon Dog.

Grey Foxes are particularly susceptible to canine distemper which is usually fatal to them if contracted.

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