



# Facts About Animals

## Facts About Animals:

### Fox

**Geographic range:** All over the world.

**Natural diet:** Foxes are omnivores, enjoying fruits, nuts, berries, rodents, birds, rabbits, and other animals' eggs.

**Habitat:** Foxes are known to inhabit forests, marshes, desert shrub land, prairies, and arctic tundra.

**Behavior:** Foxes are usually nocturnal, but in the winter they may hunt during the day to increase their chances of finding prey that may be active during daylight hours. Foxes are shy creatures, generally afraid to show themselves to people, although feeding opportunities may encourage them to appear to us.

**Reproduction:** Fox babies are known as kits. They are usually born in March and April.

**Interesting fact:** When foxes are tired, their scent is weaker, and when they are sleeping, their scent completely disappears.

### Rabbit

**Geographic range:** All over the world. There are 25 species of rabbits.

**Natural diet:** They are herbivores, enjoying grass, leaves, bark, twigs, and many other things from the garden.

**Habitat:** Rabbits live in a large variety of environments: deserts, swamps, marshes, forests, grasslands, prairies, and frozen places. Rabbits are prey animals to dogs, foxes, raccoons, weasels, bobcats, lynxes, hawks, eagles, and several species of owls. They live for about one year in the wild.

**Urban habitat:** Rabbits that live indoors with people as pets are called house rabbits. Other domestic rabbits live outdoors in hutches accessible to their owners; these rabbits are often brought in at night. In some countries such as Australia, the wild rabbit population has increased to the extent of causing problems in the wild.

**Behavior:** Diurnal and nocturnal. Rabbits are always watching out for predators and have an incredibly wide field of vision that they use to scan overhead. They are complex social animals that form relationships among themselves and determine levels of hierarchy and dominance.

**Reproduction:** Rabbits proliferate like rabbits! This means that they reproduce rapidly and in large numbers.

**Interesting fact:** Rabbits are also called *hobbits*. Rabbits hold a great place in the folklore of many cultures.



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## Owl

**Geographic range:** All over the world, and every continent except Antarctica.

**Natural diet:** Insects, bird eggs, birds, rodents, and small mammals, depending on the species. Some species eat fish; other species are large enough to hunt larger mammals like small deer.

**Habitat:** Many kinds of places, including woodlands, farmlands, tundra, jungles, and rainforests.

**Behavior:** Nocturnal, solitary, non-hibernating.

**Reproduction:** Owl species generally produce one nest of chicks a year. In temperate areas of North America, chicks are born in the spring. Owls lay their eggs depending on the amount of food available to them. In years of scarce prey, they may not nest at all, and when food is abundant, they may lay as many as six eggs. Chicks are usually born, or hatched, two days apart.

**Interesting Fact:** Because owls have huge eyes that are forward looking, they cannot move their eyes. Instead, they move their entire head to change their field of vision, and they have the capability of turning their head almost completely around.

## Raccoon

**Geographic range:** From Canada to South America.

**Natural diet:** Nuts, fruits, berries, corn, fish, insects, bird eggs, birds, rodents, and small mammals. Raccoons are opportunistic and omnivorous. When they live around people, owls eat the remains from garbage cans, fruits, insects, and available dog and cat food.

**Habitat:** Woodlands and farmlands; usually found near rivers, streams, and lakes. Raccoons like to build their dens in hollow trees.

**Urban habitat:** Woodpiles, trees, attics, sheds, under houses, and in storm drains.

**Behavior:** Nocturnal, solitary, non-hibernating. Raccoons are shy when people appear threatening to them. In areas where they are not chased and hunted, they might be curious, and perhaps playful.

**Reproduction:** One litter per year, usually with three or four young, called kits. Raccoons' breeding season is from January to June, and they usually breed in February with the babies born in April or May. At around eight weeks of age, the babies leave the den with their mother to find a new home. Babies are weaned at 12 weeks and leave their mother in the fall or early winter.

**Interesting fact:** Raccoons have five fingers on their front and rear paws, resembling human hands, and they prefer to wash their food in water before eating.

## Skunk

**Geographic range:** Skunks are found in most parts of the United States and Canada as well as in Mexico.

**Natural diet:** In summer skunks feed on various insects and grubs, eggs of ground-nesting birds, and small mammals. Skunks also like spiders, snails, ants, wasps, and crayfish. They eat



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fruits and berries when these are in season. When they live around people, they eat the remains from dog and cat food.

**Habitat:** Generally in wooded areas. Skunks live in trees in nests they make of leaves.

**Urban habitat:** Skunks will look for any place that will make a good den, including spaces under commercial buildings and houses.

**Behavior:** Nocturnal.

**Reproduction:** Female skunks give birth in the spring (from May to June). They generally have from five to eight babies per litter. The babies are weaned at eight weeks and stay with their mother until four months of age.

**Interesting fact:** Skunks' colors are not protective at all. Skunks are bold and show their enemies that they should not be bothered.

## Squirrel

**Geographic range:** Europe, North America, and the southern part of Africa.

**Natural diet:** Nuts, fruits, and berries.

**Habitat:** Generally in wooded areas. Squirrels live in trees in nests they make of leaves. Some species nest in holes in trees.

**Urban habitat:** Squirrels build their nests in a variety of places including attics, cars, barbeque grills, chimneys, and under porches.

**Behavior:** Diurnal, non-hibernating, and active year round.

**Reproduction:** The females give birth twice a year, spring (from January to April) and fall (from August to September). They generally have from two to four babies per litter. Baby squirrels leave the home and go out on their own at around three to four months of age.

**Interesting fact:** Squirrels chew on tree branches to sharpen and clean their teeth. In many trees where squirrels have built their nests, you will see small tree branches lying on the ground around the tree. Squirrels also chew on power lines, which causes many power outages throughout the country.

## Opossum

**Geographic range:** From North America to South America.

**Natural diet:** Omnivorous, plants, insects, and small rodents. When opossums live around people, they eat remains from garbage cans.

**Habitat:** Opossums usually like temperate foothills or farmlands. They also prefer to live near water. They were introduced to California from the eastern United States.

**Urban habitat:** Opossums have adapted to living alongside people. They live in roof spaces, gardens, and wooded areas, and eat from garbage cans and forage for pet food.

**Behavior:** Nocturnal. In cold climates, opossums sleep a large part of the day, but they do not hibernate.

**Reproduction:** One litter, maybe two, per year, with litters from five to fifteen babies. Opossums are tiny at birth. A litter of a dozen would fit in a tablespoon and weigh less than one ounce. Opossums



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are marsupials. The mother has a pouch that is home to her babies for three months; then they ride on her back until they are old enough to go out on their own.

**Interesting fact:** Have you heard the expression “playing possum”? This expression refers to their habit of lying on their side and appearing to be dead when they are frightened by something. This reaction may be a defense mechanism, as opossums lack good senses and other means to protect themselves. Opossums are also called “possums.”

## **Salamander**

**Geographic range:** There are 500 types of amphibian vertebrates commonly called salamanders.

**Natural diet:** Salamanders eat insects, slugs, snails, beetles, small fish, and tadpoles.

**Habitat:** Salamanders have moist skin and therefore their habitats are near water or under protection on moist ground, usually in woodlands and forests.

**Behavior:** Nocturnal.

**Reproduction:** The female usually lays 150 eggs in groups of twenty to thirty. The eggs are surrounded by a jelly-like substance that protects them. When salamanders are born, they are called larvae and have no limbs, so they swim around with their tail.

**Interesting fact:** Some salamanders look like lizards, but salamanders do not have scales.

## **Deer**

**Geographic range:** Deer are found in all continents except Africa, Australia, and Antarctica.

**Natural diet:** Deer are ruminants. They eat leaves as well as grass, flowers, and similar plants. When they live around people, they eat most things in your garden.

**Habitat:** Deer live on grasslands and in forests, mountains, and moorland.

**Urban habitat:** Most deer continue to live in the wild, but as cities and towns have grown to overtake their natural habitat, many deer now live alongside people, searching for food—trees and other plants—in gardens. Deer are often killed in accidents, struck by cars as they try to run across busy roads and highways.

**Behavior:** Deer may feed at any time, although dawn and dusk are most common. During the day deer rest in the undergrowth.

**Reproduction:** Deer usually have one or two fawns at a time. Fawns are born with white spots.

**Interesting fact:** The male deer, or bucks, grow antlers each year. These antlers are used as weapons during mating season and are then shed.

## **Frog**

**Geographic range:** Frogs can be found all over the world, in all habitats, from tropical to subarctic.

**Natural diet:** Frogs are carnivorous, dining on insects.

**Habitat:** Although frogs can live in tropical and Arctic regions, most species are found in tropical rainforests.



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**Behavior:** Active day and night, live mostly alone. Frogs are amphibians. They are semi-aquatic and can move on land by jumping or climbing, helped by their webbed feet and lack of a tail.

**Reproduction:** Frogs lay their eggs in water. The eggs are fertilized and then become tadpoles, which transform into adult frogs.

**Interesting fact:** Frogs are most noticeable through the calls they make during their mating season. Frog populations and species are declining in numbers, and scientists speculate that their decline might be related to environmental problems.

## Hawk

**Geographic range:** Hawks are found throughout North and Central America.

**Natural diet:** Lizards, rodents, rabbits, small birds, and snakes.

**Habitat:** Fields, open woodlands, alpine meadows, and deserts, and along roadsides. Some hawks live or hunt in cities, nesting on the ledges of high buildings.

**Behavior:** Diurnal.

**Reproduction:** Hawks keep the same mate for life, for as long as their partner is alive. Nests are built in trees, and the female lays about two to three brown-spotted eggs.

**Interesting fact:** A mated pair of hawks returns to the same nesting territory every year, and both will defend the nest.

## Bobcat

**Geographic range:** North America.

**Natural diet:** Small mammals and birds.

**Habitat:** Most places, as long as they are rocky and full of bushes.

**Behavior:** Mostly nocturnal and solitary.

**Reproduction:** Bobcat young are born in April or May. The average is three kittens per litter. They are born blind and stay with their mother until fall.

**Interesting fact:** Bobcats can range up to 50 miles a day while hunting, but they usually hunt within an area of four to five square miles.

## Shark

**Geographic range:** There are more than 350 species of sharks all over the world.

**Natural diet:** Sharks eat fish, turtles, sea lions, and seals. The whale shark and basking shark eat shrimp and plankton by filtering water through their gills.

**Habitat:** Depending on the species, sharks may be able to adapt to warmer or colder waters. Some sharks that hunt for seals stay closer to the surface of the water so they can feed on swimming seals and birds, while other sharks live in the deepest parts of the ocean.

**Behavior:** Most sharks are nocturnal.



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**Reproduction:** Some species of sharks lay eggs, while others give birth to their babies. Some species even hatch out of the egg while still inside of the mother. The mother does not care for her young after they are born.

**Interesting fact:** Many people do not realize that sharks are not nearly as dangerous to us as we are to them; people kill thousands of sharks a year for sport and food.

## Coyote

**Geographic range:** North America.

**Natural diet:** Coyotes eat almost everything: mice, voles, rabbits, insects, fish, frogs, snakes, lizards, grasses, fruits, nuts, and all kinds of dead animals.

**Habitat:** Open plains, grasslands, and high mesas.

**Behavior:** Primarily nocturnal but occasionally hunt during the day.

**Reproduction:** Female coyotes select den sites and give birth to from one to twelve pups in the spring. Both parents care for the pups.

**Interesting fact:** In many old fables and tales, coyotes have been described as clever and tricky, and this is true. Sometimes coyotes will leap out into a flock of birds to scare and confuse them while their partner will sneak in and grab a few of the birds for dinner.

## Bear

**Geographic range:** North America; Eastern and Western Europe; northern Asia and Japan.

**Natural diet:** Berries, roots, bulbs of plants, pine nuts, and ground-dwelling animals.

**Habitat:** Bears' habitats are generally inland, away from large bodies of water, and are in forested land or shrub cover.

**Behavior:** Bears are most active in the morning and early evening. During the day they rest in day beds that are constructed in dense cover to escape the heat.

**Reproduction:** Mating occurs between early May and mid-July, with cubs born between the end of January and early March. The number of cubs in a litter is from one to three, and usually is two.

**Interesting fact:** Bears construct their dens with a sleeping chamber in which to hibernate during the winter months. The den is usually used only once, and dens built on unstable ground can collapse.

## Dolphins

**Geographic range:** Dolphins live in most of the world's oceans.

**Natural diet:** Dolphins usually eat different types of fish and squid.

**Habitat:** Different species of dolphins live in different oceans having different temperatures. There is even one species that inhabits great rivers such as the Amazon.



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**Behavior:** Dolphins usually hunt during the day. However, when fish begin their migrations or become scarce, dolphins become nocturnal hunters.

**Reproduction:** Mature female dolphins will give birth every two to three years and could give birth as many as eight times during their lifetimes. They can give birth at any time of year but most commonly calve in the spring and summer.

**Interesting fact:** Dolphins communicate with each other through a variety of clicks and whistles.