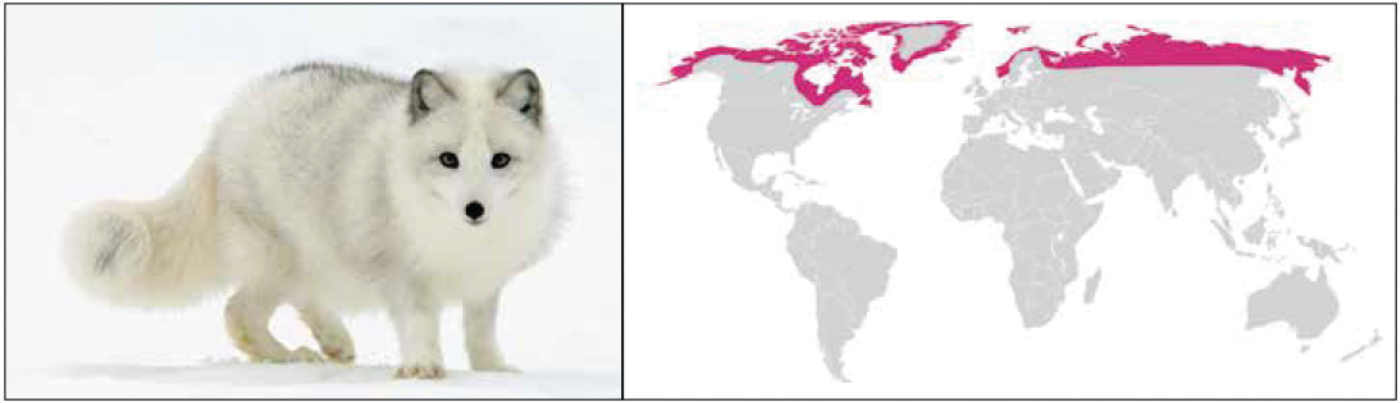


ARCTIC FOX

updated March 2017



Range	Circumpolar in the northern hemisphere
Habitat	Treeless tundra and packed ice
Diet (wild)	Birds, lemmings, voles, hares
Diet (captivity)	Dog food, fish, hard-boiled eggs
Description	Length: 20–24 inches; tail: 11–12 inches; weight: 8–10 pounds. Short ears and muzzle; coat is grayish yellow in summer and white in winter. Hair on the soles of feet.
Lifespan	12–14 years
Reproduction	In May or June, 5–8 young are born after a seven-week gestation period. The male stays with the family and participates in helping care for the young. A second litter will be born in July or August. In winter, the family unit breaks up to hunt alone. Young are weaned at about two months. Litter size has been known to increase with increased availability of prey. Arctic foxes have 12–16 nipples and 19 cubs in one litter have been recorded.
Behavior	More communal and nomadic than the red fox, Arctic foxes hunt in small bands (no more than three) and do not hibernate. Camouflage is obtained by white coats in winter to hide in snow and ice, and gray-brown in summer to blend with rocks. Their short rounded ears and short muzzle are heat saving adaptations for the polar climate, as is the fur that lines the soles of their paws. Sense of smell is well developed and necessary for locating buried food in storage under snow and rocks. In periods of food shortage, Arctic foxes have been found as far south as Quebec and parts of Norway and Sweden. They have also been found within 300 miles of the North Pole. Somewhat unwary, have been known to enter camps in search of food or just out of curiosity.
Our animals	1 female, 1 male. Born: 05/24/2015 (female); 04/01/2014 (male). Birth place: Male is a rescue from the Detroit Area Humane Society; Great Bend Zoo, KS (female). PPZ's male displays a "blue" color morph, in which the winter coat is more of a steely blue-gray rather than white. Over the vast expanse of Arctic foxes' range, the white morph predominates and fewer than one in a hundred are blue. Blue foxes are most common near the coast and on smaller islands that have a higher ratio of coastline to interior. On rocky shores, where snow doesn't settle, a white fox sticks out, but a beach-combing bluish-brown fox blends right in. The blue gene is actually dominant and white and blue morphs can occur in the same litter.
Cool stuff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlike other canids, an Arctic foxes' paws are sheathed in dense fur during the winter, giving it the species name <i>lagopus</i> which means "rabbit footed." • The fur of Arctic foxes changes twice every year. The winter fur is entirely white, and the summer coat ranges from gray to brown on the back, to somewhat lighter on the belly. Foxes may retain their darker coat throughout the year in areas of less severe climate. • Arctic foxes store food for the winter by burying leftovers in crannies or under stones. They also take advantage of polar bears by following them and cleaning up after they feed on a kill. In areas where Arctic foxes are abundant, almost every polar bear may have one or more foxes following behind it. • Arctic foxes don't begin to shiver until it's -94° F (-70° C). They have withstood temperatures of -100° F (-74° C). • Arctic foxes do not hibernate and are active all year round. They build up their fat reserves in the autumn, sometimes increasing their body weight by more than 50 percent. Arctic foxes live in large dens in frost-free, slightly raised ground. The dens are complex systems of tunnels covering as much as 1,200 square yards (1,000 square meters) with multiple entrances and many have been in existence for many decades and used by many generations of foxes. • Arctic foxes are monogamous and usually mate for life. • Arctic foxes are able to discriminate between the barks of related family members and unknown foxes. • Arctic foxes are excellent swimmers, crossing rivers and streams with ease.

Phylum
ChordataClass
MammaliaOrder
CarnivoraFamily
CanidaeGenus
Vulpesspecies
V. lagopus