

BAT-EARED FOX

updated March 2017



Range	Two distinct populations of bat-eared foxes occur in Africa: <i>O. m. megalotis</i> occurs in the southern regions including southern Zambia, Angola, and South Africa; <i>O. m. virgatus</i> occurs in Ethiopia and southern Sudan extending to Tanzania
Habitat	Commonly occurs in short grass lands as well as the more arid regions of the savanna
Diet (wild)	Harvester termites and dung beetles can make up 80 percent of diet; occasionally eat small rodents, lizards, the eggs and chicks of birds, and plant matter. The insects they eat fulfill the majority of their water intake needs.
Diet (captive)	
Description	Length: 18–26 inches; weight: 7–12 pounds. Sandy gray with lighter fur on the belly and the inside of the ears and their bands across the forehead are white or buff.
Lifespan	Wild: 6 years. Captivity: 13 years
Reproduction	After a gestation period of 60–70 days, the female gives birth to 1–6 pups. Bat-eared foxes are monogamous, but sometimes two females will mate with one male and share a communal den. Once lactation is done, which lasts 14–15 weeks, males take over grooming, defending, huddling, chaperoning, and carrying the young between dens. The father is very invested in the rearing of young, and he spends a great deal of time babysitting. Male care and den attendance rates have been shown to have a direct correlation with cub survival rates. While the father is watching the cubs, the mother is free to forage for food. Young disperse and leave their family groups at 5–6 months old and reach sexual maturity at 8–9 months.
Behavior	Bat-eared foxes use their specialized ears to locate termites, dung beetles, and other insects. They can hear larvae chewing their way out of an underground dung beetle ball. They can also detect the sound of harvesting termites chewing on short grasses. Once they locate the insects by sound, the foxes jump and quickly catch them. They will sometimes travel over 7 miles in one night when foraging for food. Bat-eared fox families have several den holes in their territory, each with many entrances and chambers. Dens are protected areas where the group sleeps, escapes from predators, and where females give birth. Predators include cheetahs, jackals, spotted hyenas, rock pythons, African wild dogs, and leopards.
Our animals	1 female, 1 male. Born: 04/2007 (female), 01/2010 (male). Both captive born
Cool stuff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bat-eared foxes are named for their large ears, which are also used for thermoregulation. • To escape from predators, bat-eared foxes rely on speed and their incredible dodging ability. They can effectively reverse direction at a flat run without losing speed. • Families of bat-eared foxes can forage together because their insect prey are replenished almost as fast as they are eaten. Since termites can escape into the ground faster than they can be eaten, bat-eared foxes lose nothing by sharing, so families of 2–3 adults with pups often forage together. When one fox hits the jackpot, everyone rushes over to join in the brief, but succulent feast. • The need to snap up termites as quickly as possible has led to the evolution of a unique flange on bat-eared foxes' lower jaw. The muscle rooted to the flange enables the foxes to eat termites at the prodigious speed of more than three chews per second. • Bat-eared foxes have more teeth than any other heterodont placental mammal, between 46 and 50. Their teeth are much smaller and reduced in sheering surface than the teeth of other fox species. This is an adaptation to their insectivorous lifestyle.

Phylum
ChordataClass
MammaliaOrder
CarnivoraFamily
CanidaeGenus
Otocyonspecies
O. megalotis