



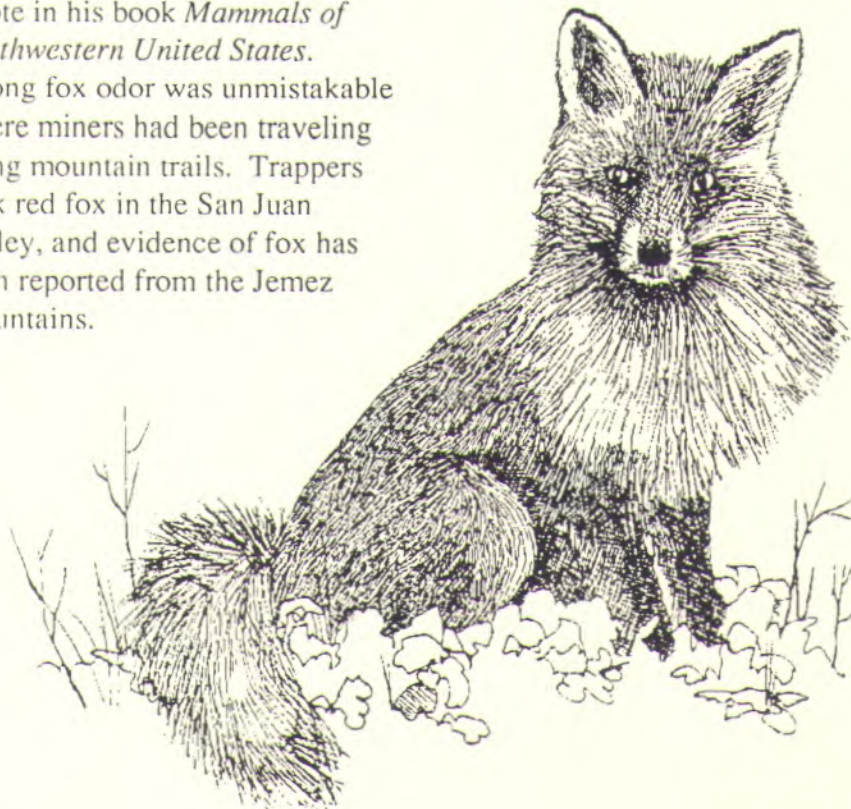
WILDLIFE NOTES

Red fox

Wily as a...fox, of course.

In New Mexico, the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) is relatively rare. It is the only member of the dog family in New Mexico with a white-tipped tail. Most sightings are from the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo mountains in the northern part of the state, with a few as far south as Dōna Aña County, and in river valleys.

Early accounts clearly place the red fox at high elevations, however. They were seen at camps at 10,000 to 12,600 feet, and were common on the top of Pecos Baldy, Vernon Bailey wrote in his book *Mammals of Southwestern United States*. Strong fox odor was unmistakable where miners had been traveling along mountain trails. Trappers took red fox in the San Juan Valley, and evidence of fox has been reported from the Jemez Mountains.



Red foxes live in territory that has reasonable rainfall and vegetation, because they are rodent hunters extraordinaire. Meadow mice, pocket gophers, voles, and rabbits are staples in their diet. They also kill other small mammals and birds when they can, and also eat berries and fruits. Because they kill rodents, foxes are assets in agricultural areas.

Male and female foxes pair with only one mate. They mate in spring, and litters of four to 10 kits are born 51 days later in a den dug from the earth. The young

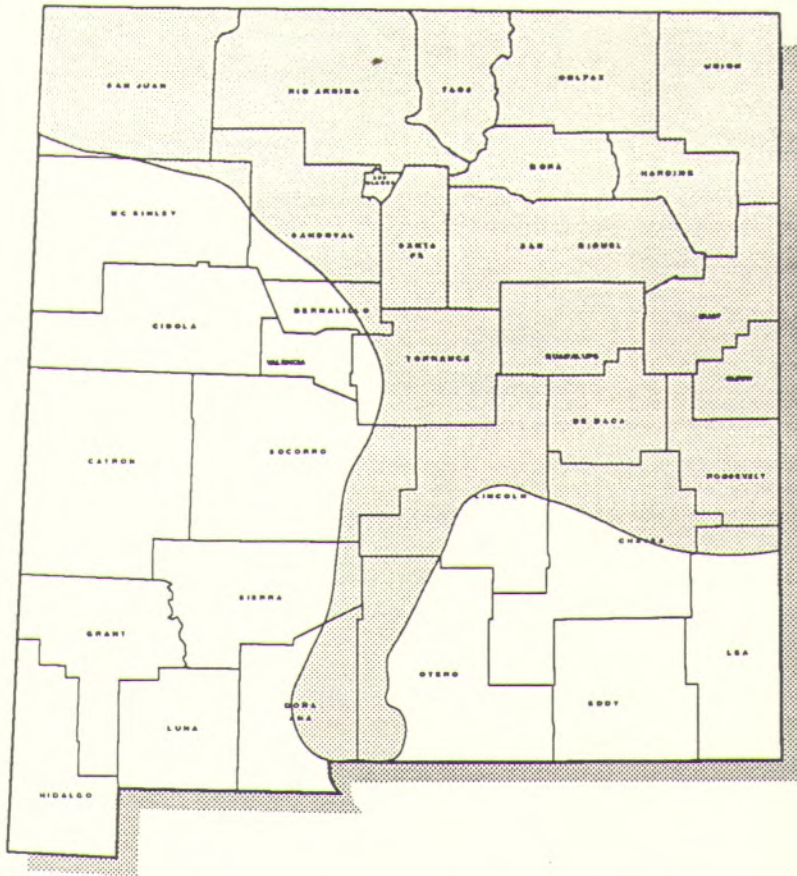


become independent after five months. In the meantime, the father fox supplies the mother and the young with part of the food they need.

The coats of red foxes range from a straw yellow to a dusky red. The tip of the tail is marked with white, and the feet and back of the ears are black. Adults weigh from six to 10 pounds, with males slightly larger than females.

Rocky Mountain red foxes are larger and yellower than eastern red foxes, and more often tend to be dusky colored. Other southwestern foxes include the desert, kit, swift, and gray foxes.

Red fox pelts have been used in Navajo ceremonies and for commercially made garments.



Red foxes are found mostly in the mountainous part of northern New Mexico, with a few as far south as Dōna Aña County. They can also be found in river valleys.



Red fox tracks are about 2 1/2 inches in length.

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