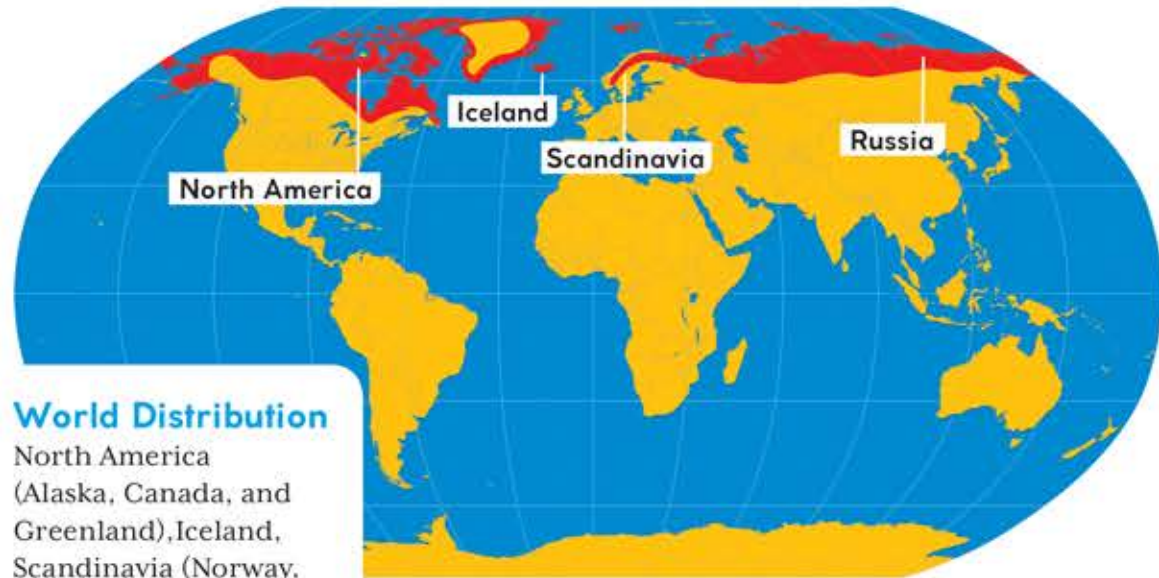


# Fact File: Arctic Foxes



## World Distribution

North America (Alaska, Canada, and Greenland), Iceland, Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden, Finland), Russia

## Habitat

Arctic and alpine tundra

## Habits

Both male and female care for young; live in underground burrows; bury food to survive in harsh winters; may scavenge for food

## Diet

Lemmings, voles, birds, eggs, hares, fish, berries, insects, and seaweed

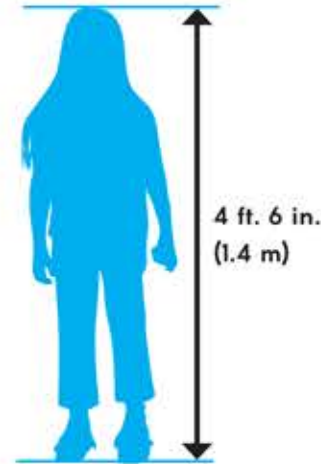
## Distinctive Features

Fur coat of different color and thickness depending on the season; long tail used for warmth and balance

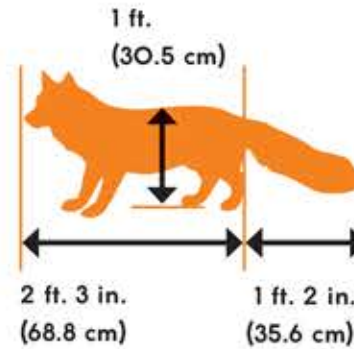
## Fast Fact

Arctic foxes live farther north than any other fox species.

## Average Size



Human (age 10)



Arctic Fox (adult)

## Classification

### CLASS

Mammalia (mammals)

### ORDER

Carnivora (foxes, bears, hyenas, seals, and related animals)

### FAMILY

Canidae (foxes, dogs, wolves, coyotes)

### GENUS

*Vulpes* (true foxes)

### SPECIES

*Vulpes lagopus* (arctic foxes)



◀ In winter, an arctic fox blends in perfectly with the snowy landscape.



## Home, Sweet Home

Arctic foxes live in the **tundra**, an area in the far north of the planet that is cold and gets little rain. These conditions make it nearly impossible for trees to grow. Low-lying mosses and **lichens** grow there instead. They settle on and between rocks. The nooks and crannies protect them from the extreme weather.

Arctic foxes live in various **habitats**. Many reside inland. Others live along rocky coastlines. Some inhabit hard-to-reach Arctic islands.

Just 48 species of land mammals are able to survive part of the year in the harsh climate of the tundra. The arctic fox is one of them. Other examples include arctic wolves, arctic hares, and caribou. But none of these animals ventures as far north as the arctic fox. It is the only land mammal native to Iceland. (That means it made its way there without the help of humans.) About 800 years ago, huge areas of the Arctic seas froze. Scientists think arctic foxes crossed an ice bridge to get to Iceland.

◀ Some arctic foxes live in the alpine tundra of Norway.

## Built for the Cold

The temperature in your kitchen freezer is about 10°F (-12°C). Sounds cold, doesn't it? Compared with temperatures in the Arctic, that's downright toasty! Temperatures in the Arctic can be -40°F (-40°C) for weeks. To survive such bitter cold, an arctic fox needs special **adaptations**.

Foxes that live in warmer regions, such as red foxes, have long legs and ears. That would mean certain death in the far north. Arctic foxes have stubby legs and small ears. Less of the animal's body is exposed to the cold, so less body heat is lost. The fox's long, dense fur helps lock in that heat. Even the undersides of the arctic fox's paws have fur for **insulation**.

Arctic foxes also have a long, fluffy tail called a brush. At bedtime, the fox lays its tail on the snow. It settles onto it like a mattress. Then the fox wraps the rest of its tail around its body like a blanket and nestles its nose underneath. Ah . . . cozy!

### Fast Fact

Arctic foxes have hollow hairs that trap body heat.

