ANIMAL LEARNING CENTER · NOT CURRENTLY AT THE ZOO

SILVER FOX

Vulpes vulpes (red fox)

Teacher & Student Fact Sheet · © **2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.**
Teachers may copy and share this sheet freely as long as they credit Plumpton Park Zoo.

Fast facts

ANIMAL GROUP	Mammal — dog family (Canidae)
NATIVE REGION	Much of the Northern Hemisphere, south to Central America and northern Africa
HABITAT	Forest, tundra, prairie, desert, mountains, farmland and towns
DIET	Rodents, rabbits, birds, snakes, insects, berries and fruit
LENGTH	18–35 in, plus a 12–22 in tail
WEIGHT	About 7–31 lb
LIFESPAN	About 3 years on average in the wild; 10–12 years in human care
STATUS	Least Concern (IUCN)



A silver fox's frosted black-and-gray coat.

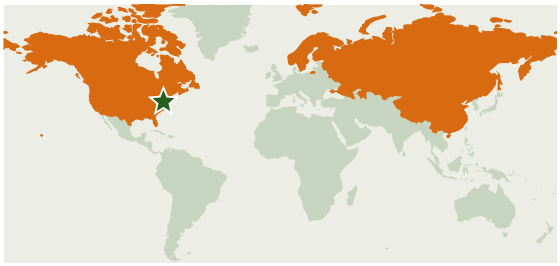
Did you know?

- A silver fox is not its own species. It is a red fox with a gene change that darkens its fur.
- By one estimate, only about one red fox in ten has a silver coat.
- In 1959, scientists in Siberia began breeding silver foxes for friendliness alone. By the tenth generation, 18 percent were extremely tame.
- Tame foxes whimpered for attention, licked people's hands and wagged their tails, much like puppies.
- Red foxes cannot climb trees, but Maryland's other wild fox, the gray fox, can.

Words to know

Color form: animals of the same species that have a different coat color.
Recessive gene: a gene that only shows when an animal gets a copy from both parents.
Domesticated: changed over many generations to live alongside people, like dogs.
Cache: a hidden store of food saved to eat later.

Where it lives in the wild



Lives in the wild ★ Plumpton Park Zoo, Rising Sun, MD

Think about it

1. Is a silver fox a different species from a red fox? How do you know?
2. How can two red foxes have a silver pup?
3. In the Siberian experiment, what was the only trait the scientists bred the foxes for? What other changes appeared?
4. How does a fox catch a mouse that is hidden under snow?
5. Name two ways to tell a gray fox from a red fox.

Draw it

In the box below, draw a silver fox and a red fox side by side. Label each one's coat color, ears, bushy tail and white tail tip.

STANDARDS · GRADES 3–8 **WRITTEN FOR GRADES 3–5**

Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **3-LS3-1 · MS-LS3-2 · MS-LS4-5**
Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.3.C · 3.1.6-8.N · 3.1.6-8.R**

Draw here

Learn more: plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/silver-fox/ · **Sources:** Animal Diversity Web (University of Michigan); Maryland DNR; OMIA; Kukekova Lab (University of Illinois); Science History Institute
Supports Maryland and Delaware (NGSS) and Pennsylvania (STEELS) standards: 3-LS3-1 (3.1.3.C) · MS-LS3-2 (3.1.6-8.N) · MS-LS4-5 (3.1.6-8.R)
Plumpton Park Zoo · 1416 Telegraph Rd, Rising Sun, MD 21911 · (410) 658-6850 · plumptonparkzoo.org · a 501(c)(3) nonprofit zoo

SILVER FOX

Before and after your research

 © 2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.
Teachers may copy and share this sheet freely as long as they credit Plumpton Park Zoo.

Before you research · 5 minutes

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Predict: where in the wild does the silver fox live?
Circle one (or more if it lives on more than one):

Africa | Asia | Australia | Europe | North America | South America

2. Predict: what does it eat?
☐ plants ☐ other animals ☐ both

3. Word hunt: find these words on page 1. Put a check by each one you already know.
☐ Color form ☐ Recessive gene ☐ Domesticated ☐ Cache

Pick one word and write what it means in your own words:

4. My question: one thing I want to find out about the silver fox.

While you research

Read the animal page:
plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/silver-fox/

Write two facts you did not know before.

Draw or describe one body part that helps it survive, and say how it helps.

Draw here

After your research · talk it over

1. Check your prediction. Native region: Much of the Northern Hemisphere, south to Central America and northern Africa. Was your guess right?
☐ yes ☐ no ☐ partly

2. Diet check. The fact sheet says: Rodents, rabbits, birds, snakes, insects, berries and fruit. What did you learn about how it finds or eats food?

3. Discuss with a partner, then write your best answer.
- How can two red foxes have a silver pup?
- In the Siberian experiment, what was the only trait the scientists bred the foxes for? What other changes appeared?

4. Exit ticket.
One thing I learned: _____
One thing I still wonder: _____

ADJUST IT
Grades K–2: talk and draw instead of writing; read the questions aloud. **Grades 6–8:** draw a Punnett square for two red foxes that each carry the silver gene, then say what fraction of their pups would be silver; add evidence from the fact sheet to every answer.

Learn more: plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/silver-fox/ · Fact sheet page 1 has the fast facts, map and vocabulary this page refers to.
Grades 3–8 · Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **3-LS3-1 · MS-LS3-2 · MS-LS4-5** · Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.3.C · 3.1.6-8.N · 3.1.6-8.R**
Plumpton Park Zoo · 1416 Telegraph Rd, Rising Sun, MD 21911 · (410) 658-6850 · plumptonparkzoo.org · a 501(c)(3) nonprofit zoo