

When do red-foxes have their off-spring and do they have big litters?

Red foxes mate from about mid to late winter; after a two month gestation period the female will give birth to a litter of about 2 – 4 pups with a maximum of around 10 -12 (red foxes are seasonal monogamists meaning that the male will only mate with one female each year). After a little over half a year (by early fall) the young foxes will leave their mother's care and go off on their own.

The red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) is native to most of the temperate regions of North America, Europe and Asia. However, the red fox is not native to large parts of the United States; red foxes are/were a popular species to hunt in Europe and were introduced into the south eastern United States in the mid 1800's for sport and the fur trade. They have spread across most of the country since then. There is a fairly small population of native red foxes in the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountains.

Red foxes are very skilled, adaptable and crafty predators and as such are considered to be a threat to several native species in California (of concern to us in Palo Alto are their effects on the California clapper rail, salt marsh harvest mouse and burrowing owl all of which are an endangered species which nest in the Baylands). Red foxes readily eat almost anything from berries and fruit to insects, reptiles, amphibians, eggs, birds and small mammals. They can have deleterious effects on other animals not only by killing adults but also by destroying eggs, eating young animals and digging up burrows or destroying nests.