

**SAN JOAQUIN KIT FOX
(VULPES MACROTIS MUTICA)**

Federal/California status: Endangered/Threatened



Description

Kit foxes are about the size of a house cat, standing about 12 inches (30 cm) high at the shoulder and weighing about five pounds. Color of kit foxes varies from place to place, and season to season. The most common colors are buff, tan, grizzled, or yellowish-gray. Two distinctive coats develop during the year: a tan summer coat and a silver-gray winter coat. They are usually "rangy" in appearance and have very large ears and a bushy, black-tipped tail.

Kit foxes are most active at night, but can be seen during the daytime, even napping in front of their dens. Young are born in early spring and can be seen out of the den at slightly more than 1 month of age. Young foxes usually begin leaving the family in August or September. Young foxes are also known to stay with their parents through the following year to help raise the next litter.

Individual foxes move around a lot, sometimes miles at a time. A fox can move into an area overnight. They often change dens and many dens may be used in a year. Den characteristics vary across the kit fox range. Entrances can vary in size and shape but are usually 8 to 10 inches in diameter, and normally are higher than wide. Dens in which pups are born and raised tend to have more entrances and show more evidence of use, such as fox scat (droppings), prey remains, and matted vegetation. Kit foxes also modify and use dens constructed by other animals, such as ground squirrels, badgers, and coyotes. They are also known to use human-made structures, such as culverts, abandoned pipelines, and banks in sumps or roadbeds.

Kit foxes eat mostly small mammals and insects, but the diet varies depending on the availability and abundance of prey. Kit foxes frequently leave prey remains at entrances to their dens. If you find a den with prey remains in front of

it, assume it is a kit fox den until it can be confirmed by other methods. However, there may not be any evidence that a den is being used by a kit fox. No baiting should be done by any suspected kit fox den.

The San Joaquin kit fox has been observed on the Friant-Kern Canal just north of highway 198. They can be found anywhere south of San Joaquin County on the east side of the San Joaquin Valley. On the west side of the Valley, the kit fox range extends into the San Jose area where they are being driven out by development. Non-native red foxes (introduced from the East Coast), coyotes, domestic dogs, bobcats, and large raptors can out-compete the kit fox for food and habitat. These animals also kill and eat kit foxes.

Range/distribution

Within the project area, San Joaquin kit foxes are known to occur in Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare counties.

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Photos

